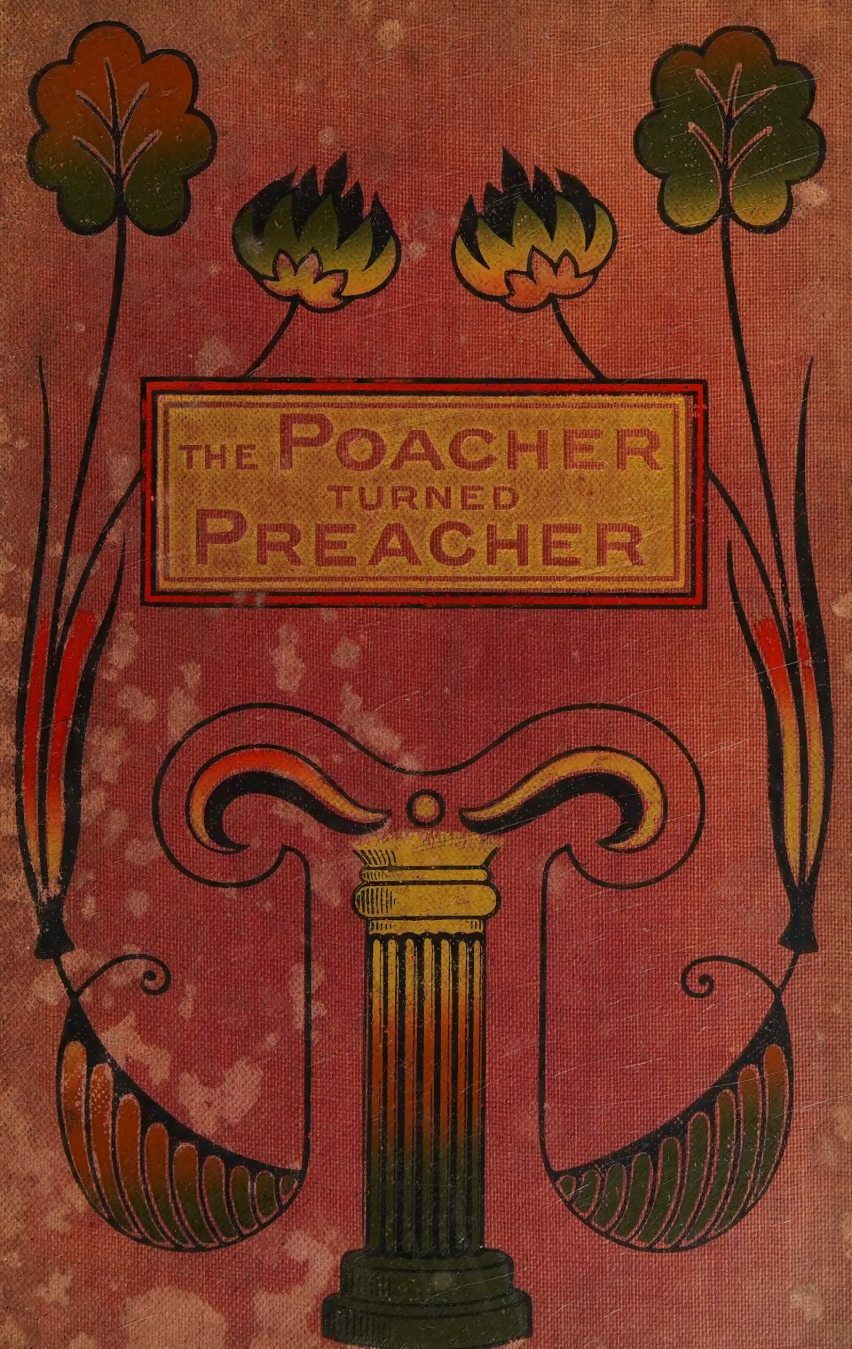
THE POACHER
TURNED
PREACHER

"IF TA'D DENIED THI RELIGION, I'D HA' WARMED THA PROPERLY."—*p.* 27.

THE POACHER TURNED PREACHER.

JOHN PRESTON, OF YEADON.

BY

REV. BENJAMIN GREGORY.

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THE POACHER TURNED PREACHER

JOHN PRESTON, OF YEADON.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—YEADON AND THE YEADONERS; THE WEST RIDING DIALECT; THE YORKSHIRE CHARACTER.

"Days gone by will cum no moore,
Soa let us mak' a try
Ti gether up what taales weh can
O' t' days 'at's long gone by."

YORKSHIRE DITTY.

JOHN PRESTON was so indigenous, such a genuine outgrowth of his native soil, that to understand the man without some knowledge of his rough environments is quite impossible.

Yeadon, John Preston's birthplace, and the centre of his labours, was, in his day, a large manufacturing village, but, having just about

doubled its population since, must now take rank as a small manufacturing town. It is now a station on the Ilkley and Otley line of rail. It lies six miles N.E. of Bradford, and not much farther N. of Leeds, and its chief industry being the weaving and dyeing of woollen cloth, it had close trade relations with both these towns. It is the central "don" or dune of three, having the bald, bleak Baildon on the one side, and the sylvan, flowery Rawdon on the other; it looks across the valley of the Aire, and confronts the more individualised and isolated hill of Idle. "*Yidden*," as it taught its neighbours to entitle it, seemed the most casual and contingent contiguity of human dwellings it ever was my hap to look upon. It was pitched at all imaginable angles but right-angles. Its own explanation of its architectural eccentricities was that it tumbled down from heaven in a whirlwind. But for the turnpike road that ran across it, "the preacher's house," and a few other well-built residences of the thriving wool-staplers, it might have been the chosen capital of a reckless individualism, every new erection being utterly regardless of the light and comfort of its older neighbours. It lay "in wild confusion hurled."

Methodism took a very prompt, warm grip of this, at that time, wild and uncouth village. So early as the year 1747, but eight years after the first Methodist Class Meeting was formed in London, James Rhodes began to hold evangelistic prayer-meetings in the place, and was the first to teach

its stony echoes the music of the Methodist hymn-tunes and the uplifted voice of the Methodist prayer leader. His brother Joseph preached the first Methodist sermon on the spot, in Judith Jackson's cottage. She was a very unapocryphal heroine. One of the first converts, Thomas Mitchell, was in the very next year, 1748, called out by Wesley into the itinerant work, and became one of its bravest and most successful pioneers who, "after the manner of men, fought with beasts at" many a rural "Ephesus." From that time, for now well nigh a century and a half, the names of Rhodes and Mitchell have been a praise and a power amongst the Methodist Churches of the West Riding. Of the former name seven worthies have already reinforced the ministry of Methodism, five of whom are still in active service, and a large number have brought honour to one or other of those names in the discharge of the Church's various local offices, and by adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour both in public and in private life.

The first man who ever dared to preach in the open street of Yeadon was no less remarkable a personality than William Darney, one of the quaintest and the sturdiest of the early Methodist preachers. He was as dauntless as he was droll. Before he knew anything of Wesley, he had been the successful evangelist of a large and spiritually destitute tract, the wild hill-country which constitutes the border-land of Lancashire and Yorkshire. He sought out and brought together the shepherdless and scattered sheep, "who neither food nor

feeder" had amongst the moorland "heights" and "edges" and the deep-set and secluded dales.

Whilst *looking up* these half-starved, wandering sheep, he had confronted a dissolute and doubting shepherd, a Cambridge graduate, William Grimshawe, who was the first to render famous the gaunt, bald, moorland village, Haworth; and who himself became one of the greatest spiritual sheep-masters of his age. The nomadic William Darney thus became the patriarch of a multitudinous tribe of Israelites indeed. With the true instincts of a genuine revivalist, he had gathered his converts into mutual edifying companies, popularly known as "William Darney's Societies."

These scattered little Churches he induced Wesley, in 1747, to visit and to take within the sweep of his "pastoral crook." The names of these lone hamlets, which Wesley enters in his *Journal*, are expressive of the wildness of the hid-away localities, such as "Roughlee," "Widdup," "Stonesey Gate."

William Darney was the minstrel as well as the evangelist of these neglected hill-folk. He was a facile *improvisatore*, and arrested and conciliated his unfastidious outdoor hearers by extemporised verses, in which the familiar names of places and of persons, such as "Ling Bobs," and "Brothers Tofts and Wrangle" were surprised to find themselves the themes of sacred song. These effusions William Darney was induced to publish, under the title: *Collection of Hymns in Four Parts.*

This brave and blithesome missioner followed in the steps of Joseph Rhodes and Thomas Mitchell, and whilst holding forth at Yeadon was assaulted by a ferocious rabble-rout, who were hounded on and headed by the clergyman of the parish of Guiseley. After flinging filth into his face, they dragged him into the road, and stamped upon him with their ponderous wooden clogs, and vowed that they would kill him there and then unless he promised never to preach in that neighbourhood again. To this the hero-hearted man replied : " By the grace of God, I never will," of course meaning, " I never will make any such unworthy promise." But the priest-led ruffians misunderstood him to engage not to come preaching in the place again, and marched off in uproarious triumph.

Undeterred by murderous outrage, young Jonathan Maskew of Bingley lifted up his herald-voice in Yeadon, and by the same ruffian Church-men had his clothes torn off him, and was dragged, naked, over the jagged causeway till he was a contused and quivering mass. In youth I trod those ill-laid, rugged side-paths more reverently than the polished pavement of some stately minster, as I thought of the stout-hearted Jonathan Maskew's brave confessorship for Christ.

In 1766 the first Methodist chapel was opened in the village, and in 1770 Wesley reopened it in person, after its enlargement. After preaching there again to a large congregation in 1781, the man whose preaching had for more than forty years produced such wonderful effects records in his

journals: "I know not when I have seen a whole congregation so much moved."

In 1782 he enters: "On Saturday evening I preached to an earnest congregation at Yeadon; the same congregation was present in the morning, together with an army of little children." Had Wesley been a predictive seer he would have put a prophetic emphasis on that word "army"; for a host of "good soldiers of Jesus Christ, valiant for the truth upon the earth," sprang up from that loving band of gladsome little ones whose lark-song he listened to delightedly on that bright May Sunday morn. On an earlier visit, 1781, he had noted: "We had fifty or sixty children present at 5 a.m., and as many or more in the evening; and more affectionate ones I never saw. . . . God has touched their hearts." His last visit to Yeadon was in 1786: "Yeadon, where the work of God is rapidly going forward. Such a company of loving children I have nowhere seen but at Oldham."

These characteristics continued for full fifty years after Wesley's death—wonderful mobility to the afflatus of the Spirit through the preached word; "a whole congregation" being often "moved, as the trees of the wood are moved by a mighty wind"—the "tempest-swinging woods" of the neighbouring Esholt, Rawdon, Calverly; every branch swaying, and every leaflet dancing to the breath of heaven. Nowhere else in Britain was the prayer more richly answered: "That the Word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified."

The "loving" little ones of Wesley's latest visit were the loving old men and women of my own boyhood and young manhood.

Preston, like most other men of genius, suffers sorely from translation. With him the word and thought were interfused. His style of thinking was as vernacular as his dialect. His biographer, in attempting to do it into conventional present-day parlance, would make as sore a mistake as Preston did on the two or three occasions on which his daughters, not his wife, over-persuaded him into trying to speak Queen Victoria's English instead of that of Wycliffe and of Chaucer. He preached in his native dialect, which was the broadest and the purest Yorkshire. If anyone had asked me fifty years ago where the most classic Yorkshire could be heard, I should have answered *Yeadon*; and if still further asked which Yeadoner was the greatest master of that language, I should have said *John Preston*. And this was with him an important element of popularity and power. A long dictionary word could never pass his lips, except in satirical and irresistibly comical quotations. A Pentecostal charm attended Preston's preaching, for the great body of the hearers said by their eager faces and their sparkling eyes, "We do hear in our own tongue, wherein we were born, the wonderful works of God." Of course it is, at first, not easy to one who is not familiar with the dialect to make out with perfect confidence either its full sense or its proper sound, even when the words are phonetically spelt

with the utmost attainable accuracy. The most successful practitioner in this respect was the late Lord Tennyson ; for example, in his *Northern Farmer (old style and new style).* Yet even he felt obliged to resort to dots over some of the vowels, an expedient which is not successful even with the most cultivated readers.*

A word may not unfittingly be added here as to the distinctive features of the genuine Yorkshireman ; for the Yorkshire character is as broadly differentiated as is the Yorkshire dialect. Moreover, it requires a Yorkshireman to completely understand the Yorkshiremen ; and, one might almost add, to manage them. It is this very *pronouncedness* which constitutes their chief peculiarity. It is as if the two baskets of figs which Jeremiah saw in vision were shaken up together, "the good figs *very* good, and the naughty figs *very* naughty"

* And the *least* qualified to judge of the correctness of the way of spelling a provincial pronunciation are the very people who naturally suppose themselves to be the best judges in the matter, namely, those to whom the dialect has been familiar from their earliest years, the speech in which they learned to speak at first, and which they naturally fall into in the intercourse of everyday life. The difficulty does not arise in the case of words or phrases which may be, more or less, peculiar to a particular locality. These are recognised at once. The *pinch* is in the vowel sounds. In reading the words phonetically spelt, the indigenous Yorkshireman naturally gives to the vowels in *type* the same sound as he is accustomed to give to the same vowels on the tongue. So if he pronounces *face* 'faace,' he, of course, in thought pronounces faace as if it were *faaaace*, and thus the provincial peculiarity seems to be ridiculously exaggerated. To every Englishman who has an ear, the study of the English dialects must be very interesting, and the more so now as the dialects will soon have disappeared, scared, like the phantasies of folklore, by the shriek of the steam whistle, and the snorting of the iron-horse.

(chap. xxiv.). Given a Yorkshireman, and you may almost be sure that he is *very very*. And yet, like other specimens of animated nature, from the hedgehog to the man of genius, he has two sides, a right side and a wrong side. But in his case, the right side is "as right as a trivet," the wrong side is "as wrong as owt." Hence the Yorkshire disposition has in it the peculiar piquancy of the homely and yet not unwholesome pudding-sauce called *Yorkshire-dip*. An old rhymed aphorism pronounces of "this pleasing anxious being" of ours—

> All human life is, to this hour,
> Like Yorkshire dip, both sweet and sour.

With the like truthfulness it may be said :

> Most Yorkshiremen are, to this hour,
> Like Yorkshire dip, both sweet and sour.

It may be admitted that the saccharine of a Yorkshire nature is not unapt to settle at the bottom of the bowl, but nothing stirs it up again so readily as a revival of religion, even though a leaden spoon be used. But no fork must be thrust into the tureen, not even a hall-marked silver fork. A Yorkshireman "put out" can be not only sour, but dour.

Two great poets have described each one side of the Yorkshire character ; but only one. Cowper's representative Yorkshireman is—

> An honest man, close buttoned to the chin,
> Broadcloth without, and a *warm heart* within ;

and Scott makes Marmion remind the Scottish king that "Yorkshiremen are *stern of mood*." Both these testimonies are true, and are not mutually contradictory, but mutually complementary.

The temperament of the West Riding of Yorkshire especially is as inflammable as one of its own factories.

Mrs. Gaskell's animated account, in her *Life of Charlotte Brontë*, of the forcible expulsion from Haworth of Mr. Brontë's predecessor as "Perpetual Curate" of Haworth—because he was presented to the living against the wish of the parishioners—is easily believable.

And in times of agitation and disruption, a Methodist of Yeadon might prove a "parlous" and electric spark-emitting creature if he were incautiously and injudiciously *rubbed the wrong way*.

The Right Honble. W. E. Forster, whose mother lived in Yeadon at the time of the great Methodist disturbances of 1849 (and he himself in the near neighbourhood), said to me: "The Methodist Battle of Yeadon was the last field-day of the last civil war ever fought in England on religious grounds." The malcontents attacked the preacher's house in immense force with avowed intent of violence, and Starkey, Preston's great compeer, defended it, and, after warning, scared away the assailants by discharge of his loaded piece.

But the fact that Yeadon was the most excited

place in the whole kingdom during that disastrous time was owing, in great part, to the very fact that so large a proportion of its inhabitants were Methodists, at least in name. Hence, whatever mightily affected Methodism, stirred to the very lowest depths the passions of the populace.

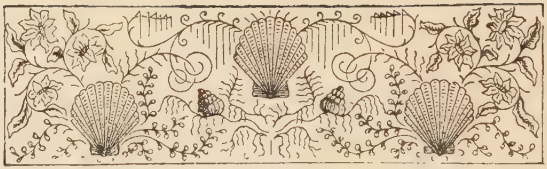
If you claim from Yorkshiremen conciliation, compromise, concession, you must begin by setting them a fair and full example. If you want to "provoke them to love" you must not start by "provoking them to wrath." Otherwise your Yorkshireman will straighten his form and square his shoulders, and tell you: "It 's n' use talking, I will 'ot be *threaped*." Of all the people I have ever known, the Yorkshire folk are the most considerate of each other's queernesses, and the most indulgent of each other's awkwardness. A man will make a "stumpy" objection to an arrangement, assigning for his obstructiveness no reason whatsoever but "Ah doan't like it; I's wun o' that soart." To which the answer is: "Well, lad, thah s'all ev it as ta likes." "A soft answer" like this takes the wind out of his sails, and he in turn replies: "Well, ye knaw, Ah doan't want to be ockard (awkward)." Whereupon he lets the rest have it as they like. I have seen an "ockard" man completely *dumbfoundered* in a leaders' meeting, by a brother saying, "Well, Joe lad, thah knaws we all *luvvs* thah." I've many a time witnessed a Yorkshire version and rehearsal of the winding-up of the quarrel between Brutus and Cassius. C.: "Do you *confess*

so much? Give me your *hand.*" B.: "And my *heart, too!*"

The Yeadonians were given not a little to vociferous responsiveness, which was sometimes awoke quite as much by the energy and intensity of the preacher's delivery and tone, as by the weight of his deliverance. One Sunday night the learned headmaster of Woodhouse Grove School, the late Samuel Ebenezer Parker, was preaching at Yeadon on the words, "Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; . . . and do count them but dung," etc. Finding no English word sufficiently expressive, he fell back upon the Greek. He said: "All things that came between St. Paul and Christ he swept out of his way, and counted them but offal, refuse, *skubala.*" "Ay! that's it. Glory!" shouted the uplifted Yeadoners. The preacher's dramatic look and gesture did the Greek into Yeadonese with effectiveness and emphasis.

Amidst this excitable community was born John Preston. He grew up a sinewy and quick-witted youth, whose strong, unique, and winsome personality was sure to make him an influential factor in the life of the community of which he was, in fact, the most full-blown outgrowth. His early life, however, contained small promise of his future usefulness. Being naturally bold and genial, humorous and hardy, he was passionately fond of company and of hazardous, adventurous sport, both of which were, to working men at least, associated with the public-house. His exuberant

energy was dedicated to the fascinating and exciting pastimes of poaching and cock fighting. I heard him describe himself in his unconverted state in these words : "I allus went abaht wi' a dog in a band (cord) an' a cock in a poke."



CHAPTER II.

CONVERSION.

AN account of his conversion appeared in *The Methodist Magazine* for 1819, in the memoir of the Rev. John Crosby, written by the Rev. Edmund Grindrod. In the year 1806, a great revival of religion suddenly broke out at Yeadon. Mr. Crosby himself gives the following account of it: "Small companies began to meet for prayer, but their houses soon became too small to contain the numbers who ran at the sound of singing and prayer. Numbers were struck with deep convictions in their own houses while at their ordinary employments, whose concern for salvation was such that persons were sent for to pray with them. Their neighbours, hearing the now well-known sounds of joy or sorrow, flocked in, and soon filled the house. There they continued till the close of the day, when the intended dinner was found removed into a corner or still before the fire. On these occasions some continued on their knees for five or six hours together. Some fled from these scenes to a distance, but even there God

found them. They were seized with such horror that they returned to their neighbours in distress, requesting the prayers of the godly. It is natural to suppose that in such a work there would be some irregularities. A number of men who were employed at a mill would hold a prayer-meeting one day at the noon hour, which was easily begun but not so easily concluded, for they prayed until night, a conduct by no means justifiable. The proprietor looked in, but returned saying, 'I dare not disturb them, for God is among them.' You have probably heard of their love-feasts, held in a field, where, I suppose, five or six thousand people attended?"

Mr. Crosby adds that he was occupied a day in admitting new members, and his colleagues another day apiece. "Five hundred and seven were added to the Yeadon Society alone." This would be, at that time (1806), at least one-fourth of the entire population. Mr. Crosby continues: "I have never seen such a work before; first, where there appeared *so much of God, so little of man*; secondly, where the work was *so great in so small a place*; thirdly, where the work was seemingly *so deep in so short a time*; where *the people in general were so overawed by the majesty and goodness of God.*" What a beautiful fulfilment of Hosea's prophecy: "They shall *fear* the Lord and His *goodness* in the latter days."

John Crosby finishes his record thus: "Even the jolly huntsman blew his horn in vain. Not a man durst follow the sound. Those who were not

converted said: 'How can we go a-hunting when the people are praying on every hand? Their prayers will follow us.'"

As an instance of sudden and overpowering conviction of sin by the direct action of the Holy Spirit, he gives the case of Preston. But it will be best to give John Preston's own account of it, as I had it from his own lips years before I read it in *The Methodist Magazine.*

He had never heard a sermon which produced the least effect upon him, excepting one which he and his companion Starkey had extracted from a fellow-villager as a sort of spree. One Sunday morning, when the two pals were out poaching in Carlton Wood, they came upon a well-known local preacher, Johnny Brown.

"Where's ta bahn (bound), Johnny, lad?" said Johan.

"I'se bahn ti Pool, lad, and Ah nobbut wish thee and Will here 'ud go wi' meh."

"Thah's bahn to preach, lad," says Johan, "soa thah gets up into that tree, an' thah gives us a stave on it here."

Johnny was famous for being "constant ready," in season and out of season. So they helped him up into his arboreal pulpit, where he gave them his most fervid warning and appeal, which, for the time being, touched them to the quick. One Sunday night, soon afterwards, as Johnny was walking up Apperley Lane, after preaching at "The Grove," he again encountered Johan, who was prowling about armed with a

"THAH'S BAHN TO PREACH, LAD."—*p.* 24

heavy cudgel. "Johnny," says Preston, in a threatening tone, "thah calls thisen a Methody, doestun't?" "Ay, lad," says Johnny, "I is that fro' t' crahn o' mi yead ti t' sole o' mi foit; an' I aims to live an' die a Methody." "Thah's saaved thi baacon, Johnny," answered Johan, showing him the bludgeon, "for if ta'd denied thi religion, I'd ha' *warmed* tha *properly*."

One Sunday afternoon, as Johan sat drinking in the George and Dragon, Apperley Bridge, more than two miles from home, words were suddenly borne in upon his mind which he could not remember ever having heard before: "Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which ye will in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you." Not being a Bible-reader, or a church or chapel-goer, Preston had no idea where the passage could be found. Indeed, it seemed not to come from his own memory at all, but from without—from some invisible speaker close at hand. He tried to drink off his beer, but his trepidation was so violent that he could not lift the tankard to his mouth. He, therefore, set it down upon the table, precipitately left the house, and hurried homewards as fast as his trembling limbs could carry him, haunted all the way by the strange and bodeful words. Yet when he reached Yeadon he could not get home, but felt irresistibly drawn to the Methodist chapel. The place was so crowded that he could only find a standing place in the aisle. He entered just as the preacher, who turned out to be John Crosby,

was giving out his text, and the clatter of the man's hasty and excited tread, as it broke upon the expectant hush of the listening multitude, naturally drew the preacher's eyes in his direction. To Johan's amazement and consternation, the words were the very same as had scared him from the George and Dragon.

The strong-nerved poacher felt himself in a stronger, sterner grip than that of any gamekeeper. He writhed and shook, but could not move a step. At last, as "the secrets of his heart were made manifest," he told us, "I roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart." For many days and nights he wrestled with the wrestling Angel of the Covenant, till at last he had to ask himself—

> What is it keeps me back,
> From which I cannot part,
> Which will not let my Saviour take
> Possession of my heart?

He saw at once that it was his poaching apparatus, and, above all, his game-cock. He resolved to make the sacrifice without delay. He summarily disposed of these, "the dearest idols he had known." And he drew back these last bolts and opened the door.

This entire surrender to the Saviour was what Preston always insisted on both in the pulpit and the prayer-meeting. Brother Booth of Yeadon, one of Preston's most devoted converts, loved to tell of the way in which John Preston treated him

as he knelt at the penitent-bench along with some fifty others. John laid his hand with a gentle, earnest grasp upon the shoulder of the wrestling, writhing suppliant, and said: "John, lad, thah's summat thah hezzent gi'en up yit. Nah, tell meh what it is!" Poor Booth replied that he had given up his spring-spell and his boxing-gloves and all. "But there's summat else, lad; Ah knows there is!" Booth then confessed it was his song-book that he had not been able to give up. "Tear it to hattoms, lad!" said Johan. Booth went home and for ever silenced his song-book, serving it as the Ephesians served their books of magic; and immediately "found peace."

John Preston succeeded wonderfully in instilling into his hearers' minds the necessity of absolute surrender to the authority of God, in order to the attainment of His peace. During another great revival in the Yeadon Circuit, in 1840, six years after that in which Brother Booth was "brought in," I have seen some seventy penitents kneeling together at a week-night prayer-meeting. The din was deafening, and yet there was in it a sound of sublimity which could only be compared to Ezekiel's description of the noise of the Cherubims' wings as they rushed forward on God's errands, "as the voice of many waters . . . as the voice of a host"—the clamour of a camp. And yet this cry was to be distinguished constantly and clearly. "I's willin' to *'liver up all.*"

And this was the echo of John Preston's teaching. He used to say: "The Lord won't pardon

your sins bi hauves (halves), so you moan't give 'em up bi hauves!"

At the beginning of the present century cock-fighting was at once a most fashionable and a most popular amusement; and poaching was to the young inland braves what smuggling was to the adventurous dwellers on the coast. *Black Giles the Poacher* was the most *popular* of the tales of Hannah More, and even in my own day, thirty years later, poaching in that well-wooded part of Yorkshire was so common that it might almost have been ranked amongst its most successful industries. A large proportion of the skilled workmen of the neighbourhood loved to show their skill mainly in the management of their pet dog and gun, and their little snug establishment of nets and snares. Such was the skill to which these men attained, that a devotee of the sport was very rarely bagged himself, except through the well paid for information of some companion who was also a devotee of drink.

I gathered that a large contingent to the tenancy of the Wakefield House of Correction, of which the chaplain was a friend of mine, was derived from this excitement-loving class.

Before dismissing this, to a thorough Yorkshireman like me, most alluring subject, let me congratulate young Yeadon on its having found a safer kind of sport than poaching for the exercise and the development of its skill and sinews. The Yeadon Cricket Club has won a national celebrity. Teddy Peate, of Yeadon, was for years

accounted as the finest bowler in the kingdom, and some of the most familiar names of local preachers in Yeadon reappear in the champions of the cricket-field, Preston, Starkey, Slater, Myers, and Murgatroyd.

Amongst John Preston's many converts the most notable was William Starkey, who had been his chief companion in wickedness, and became next to himself the most effective local preacher of the whole brotherhood in Yeadon. Soon after Johan's conversion, a number of his old associates waylaid him as he went to chapel on a Sunday morning, and bore him bodily into one of his ancient haunts, the Robin Hood public-house, the poachers' rendezvous. Starkey was more powerfully built than even Preston himself. They insisted on "standing treat to their old leader." Instead of this he dropped upon his knees and began praying, as few but Preston ever prayed. The result was that he led them all off to chapel in triumph. Starkey was a mighty preacher in his time, as I can testify.

From first to last John Preston was a wholehearted, happy, and devoted Christian.

It was characteristic of John Preston's exemplary lowliness and self-suppression that he could not be persuaded to take office in the Church until ten years after his conversion, when he was in his thirty-seventh year. He then consented to become a class-leader, an office he sustained with exceptional success to the close of life. He was appointed to this post by that judicious biblical scholar, the Rev.

Miles Martindale. Ten years later still he was induced to become a local preacher. The unsurpassable vivacity and versatility of Preston's preaching is all the more astonishing in consideration of the fact that he began to preach in his forty-eighth year.

CHAPTER III.

A SPECIMEN OF PRESTON'S PREACHING.

THE first time I ever heard John Preston preach was in the year 1833, and in the newly-opened academic sanctuary of Woodhouse Grove. Though I was not yet thirteen years of age, and though Preston was barely out of his apprenticeship as a preacher, I had already heard so much of Preston's preaching that my expectation was at the very highest pitch. But the reality went far beyond my preconceptions. As it was a typical specimen of Johan's style of preaching, and of conducting public service, I cannot do better than describe it. One special connotation of Preston's personality and preaching was its *unforgettability*. Besides, to use a local phrase, " I've *thowt* on't mony a time, an' I've *telled* on't mony a time," so my substantial accuracy may safely be relied on.

There stood before us in the pulpit a powerful, lithe, athletic, well-developed, yet spare and thoughtful-looking man, not much under six feet high, of the age of fifty-four, but much more

patriarchal-looking than mid-manhood would account for. He was *built* upon the *square*, to a very notable degree. He was square-browed, square-featured, square-shouldered, and square-chested.

The hymn-book seemed to open as if by the touching of a spring, just at the place he wanted ; and in one breath, without the slightest punctuation, he announced, in the broadest Yorkshire : "Thuty-sevent' paage, Trumpit lenth—

"Let uth an' 'eaven agree,
Aangils an' men be joined.

Nah, lads ; let's heh wun o' your liveliest tunes."* The singers, without a moment's delay, pealed forth in the genuine vernacular the words that Johan had given out. The congregation caught the spirit, and burst off into the exultant, swinging melody. Johan himself could not withhold an intermittent stave, his deep and dashing notes adding impetus to the bounding cataract of song. How they did sing it ! Find the description in the great Lake-poet's lyrical reply to "How do the waters come down at Lodore ?" "Dashing and flashing, and splashing and crashing," etc.

This performed in double-quick time, Johan did not "engage in prayer," but "prayed and cried aloud" with a wondrous blending of seraphic reverence and of filial familiarity. When "the Son" taught

* In those days it was customary to give out the metre before reading the first lines, and, by Preston, metre was always called "lenth" *(length)*. *Trumpet* measure was a favourite metre, because of its clarion cheeriness.

us to pray: "When ye pray, say Our Father," He assuredly intended us to feel even as we prayed. Yet John Preston never lost sight of "which art in heaven," or "hallowed be Thy name." In his prayers, which were very short, thanksgiving always held the foremost and the largest place. His key-note was: "Thah's been better *tiv* us nor all wer fears, an' a varrah de-al better nor wer desarvins" (*Thou hast been better to us than all our fears, and a vast deal better than our deservings*). For Johan could not be otherwise than piquant in any of his utterances. There were expressions in his public prayers which might grate upon a dainty southern ear, but not on that of a gentleman like Thomas Farmer.

I cannot better illustrate his style than by reproducing some of his pictorial passages. The text was: "For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1 Peter iii. 12). The very choice of text was highly characteristic of John Preston's preaching. He made a conscience of presenting both sides of the pillar of glory: the luminous and cheering side to the penitent believer, and the threatening, black side to the self-complacent and the hardened.

I shall not attempt to do into modern English the strong antique vocabulary of the Airedale heights; in so far as it differs not more widely from the colloquial or the journalistic English of the present day, than does the Scotch, Irish, Negro

Yankee talk, so abundant in the stories of our current magazines, or from the well-presented dialect in the West Riding tales of Charlotte Brontë and her sister (*Shirley* and *Wuthering Heights*). I must trust to the translating faculty of my readers, even as other writers do to theirs. Where, however, the words are unusually out of the beaten track, it would probably be better to prefix to each quotation a little glossary of the puzzling words therein employed, *e.g.*, "cam' dahn t' loin"—came down the lane or road; "wun o' my lasses"—daughters. Johan, before beginning his discourse, was wont to anticipate the advice given to young speakers by Dr. Dixon, "Always conciliate your audience at the very first"; in other words, put yourself *en rapport*, in *close touch* with them. Now, John did this most effectually by some little confidential confession at his own expense. This time, having read his text, he put a finger of his right hand just behind his right ear, moving it perplexedly (ignorant, of course, of the phrenological position of the bump of "eventuality"), and as if to coax up a reminiscence, he explained mysteriously: "Just afore I cam' dahn t' loin, wun o' my lasses ses to me, '*Fayther*, they've getten a rare, grand Bible at th' *Grooave*; ye mun mind ye doan't *maul* it.' Hawiver, we's lig it by" (we shall lay it aside). So, gloating over its superbness with the most admiring gaze, and taking it up, with an indraught of his breath, as some sensitive young minister might handle a delicate, dainty little baby, he laid it on the seat behind him. The volume was

the sumptuous gift of a wealthy, generous lady, Mrs. Bealey.

Preston began his homily by giving Bible instances of the yearning constancy with which the eyes of the Eternal Love are resting on the righteous, and the tender, heedful quickness with which His ear is open to their prayer. This he did in the most realistic and pictorial style. His genius flashed forth in a rough imaginativeness and a penetrating pathos. His description of Jacob's sorrows was a piece of Dutch painting of the boldest kind. It must be premised that in Yorkshire, in all the homes of Preston's class, a like distinction was observed between the two downstair rooms to that which is in Scotland indicated by "but" and "ben." The ordinary sitting-room was the roomy kitchen, called "the house," which was scrupulously clean, and served as a neighbourly reception-room. On one side of the huge and hospitable fireplace was the "bakston," or *bakestone*, on which oatcake might be prepared at the shortest possible notice. A good store of oatmeal was always kept in readiness for the emergencies of hospitality: this was called "the lump," the Yorkshire version of "You must take pot-luck" is "Ye mun *tak' a bit off o' t' lump.*" Preston's own preaching was all the more admired because it was served up "red-hot off o' t' bakston." The "parlour" was reserved for state occasions, when "the preacher" came to tea, or other "company" was looked for. Ordinarily all meals were taken in the "house-place," and the

"parlour" was reserved as a place of retirement for private reading or for meditation.

Preston said: "I oft think I see Jacob; I fancy he were summat like Paul Sug'en o' Haworth, an' ware a drab coit. I oft think I see th' owd man stridin' aht o't parlour inti t' house, scratin' 's yead, an' sayin', 'All these things mak' agean meh.'" Paul Sugden, of Haworth, I remember well. He was, indeed, a most patriarchal-looking personage in his Quaker-like "drab coit." He was the head of a large and prosperous Methodist tribe, and, being generous, and fond of high-class preaching, was a familiar and a welcome figure at gatherings where a good collection was desiderated. Preston, in his aim at homely vividness of impression, always transferred an oriental scene and personality to the meridian of Yeadon.

He next drew a graphic and affecting picture of the deliverance of Daniel. He then gave a touching illustration of God's tenderness to His exposed and feeble flock, taken from the near neighbourhood, and a recent incident. It must be borne in mind, however, that "bahnd" means *bound*, in the sense of bound for this or that place; "lam'in'-time" is lambing-time, *March*; that, in Yeadon *parlance*, "daah" is *day*; "promise" means, as in ancient writers, simply to *assure*, and may refer to the present just as well as to the future; "naah" is *now*. So Preston said: "T'other daah I wer bahnd over Pool Brig (which spans the river Wharfe), an' it wer i' lam'in'-time; an' it wer a fearful cawd daah, I promise ye: An' I noticed

there wer a little 'un, just lambed ; an' I noticed, as it moved t' yow (the ewe) moved, an shoo allus kept ti t' wind side of it. Nah, lads, ye'll be out on mony a bitter cawd daah, but God 'll allus keep ti t' wind side o' ye." I have heard nearly all the greatest speakers and elocutionists of my own time, but I never was so struck by any simultaneous look, tone, and movement as I was by the movement of the curved right arm and the sinewy shoulder, and by the downward look of majesty and yearning tenderness with which John Preston uttered those heart-affecting words. Yet he had no pretensions whatever to either rhetoric or oratory, but was just a homely, hearty teller of the things that he had felt and seen.

In dealing with the darker aspect of his text : "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil," he showed equal power. He took just one Biblical example, the case of Ahab. He showed us how the rebuking, threatening face of God was perpetually confronting that persistent, powerful evil-doer, either in His black and frowning providence, or in the stern, reproving features of Elijah and Micaiah. He struck athwart the sombre picture a lurid streak of satire, as he pointed out to us the sullen, disappointed king, when he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face and would eat no bread, and the haughty Jezebel bent over him and coaxed him to the royal banquet. Preston said : " Shoo s'ud 'a' said tiv him as we say ti sulky lads when they reckon not to want their dinners, 'Let him be, it's

t' first thing he'll tak' tull.'" ("Shoo" is *she*, and "ti," "tiv," and "tull" are variations on the word *to*.

Preston, coming to the habits of his own time and neighbourhood, belaboured with especial keenness and causticity those reputable sins which do not forfeit one's position, either in the world or in the Church ; most of all covetousness and backbiting. He said : "Some fowk (folk) think they'll get to heaven, if they nobbut (nought but, only) gie an owd coit awaah (give an old coat away). An' if they was to get theere, they'd suin get agait hackin' up t' paavement an' t' walls ; for Wesleh says, 'Her walls are of jasper and gowd.'"

Preston's simile, of course, reminds one of Milton's description of Mammon walking in heaven itself, with eyes fixed on the golden pavement. But Preston is not at all likely to have ever read *Paradise Lost*.

His description of the genus *backbiter* was perfect. This social nuisance was neither extinct nor exotic in the valley of the Aire. The graphic admonition, "Thou shalt not go up and down among thy people as a tale-bearer," was not out of date. Nor was the antique description in the least unrecognisable : "He that goeth about as a tale-bearer revealeth secrets, therefore meddle not with him that openeth wide his lips." It must be premised that "Hev' yen't" is a contraction of *Have you not?* "Le-an 'em" is a sort of "reflexive verb," meaning *lean themselves*.

Preston asked with an off-hand confidence :

"Hev' yen't seen 'em? Thaah'll cum inti t' house of a mornin', when thaah owt to be at their wark; an' thaah'll le-an 'em up agean a taable i' this uns" (in this way). Here Preston folded his arms in the most luxurious leisureliness, and with significant importance—"an' thaah'll saah, 'Hev' ye heeard?' An' ye'll saah, 'Why, what's t' matter nah?' An' thaah'll saah, 'Eh, but it's a pity; a soar pity!' (With a slow and solemn shake of the head.) An' ye'll saah, 'Why, whativer's up?' An' thaah'll saah, 'Ah couldn't ha' thowt it! Ah's niver ha' thowt it!' An' ye'll saah, 'Cum, lad, thah mud (might) as weel tell's.' An' thaah'll saah, 'Sich prefessions! Sich prefessions!'" (This last with a sneer of inexpressible disgust, and with uplifted hands of utmost moral amazement.)

Thus he laid bare the art, trade, and mystery of the "busybody in other men's matters," painting to the life the affected reluctance of the talebearer to dwell upon his tit-bit of evil-minded tittle-tattle, and the eagerness of the neighbours to hear the very worst of some slandered neighbour. It was a fine anticipative comment of the R.V. in Prov. xviii. 8: "The words of a whisperer are as dainty morsels, and they go down into the innermost parts." Certainly, to too many natures, the words of calumny, like the words of compliment, "go down" as luxuries. The preacher showed that the avidity of the listener proved the tale-bearer's words were as savoury to him as to the purveying backbiter himself, and if Preston's face, at the close of

his description, could have been photographed, it would have formed a powerful illustration of the passage: "The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue" (Prov. xxv. 23).

Preston then, looking round upon his audience with the air of one who knew well that it was his duty "to reverence his betters," said, in a tone of deferential deprecation: "I doan't mean to saah as there's ony sich i' this chapel. But, if t' cap fits ye, on wi't. I's charge ye nowt for my job."

Depend upon it, there was a stagnation in the backbiting business "for one while" within the gathering-ground of the chapel where John Preston preached that sermon.

Preston next showed how we may be translated from beneath the black and awful frown of the just and holy God, into the sunlight of His approving smile. He began by insisting that a deep conviction of our own sinfulness was the first necessity. He said: "I'se a hadvocate for a reet dahn radical wakkening." (The aspirate at the beginning of a word is often used in Yorkshire for the sake of emphasis. *Dahn*, in the West Riding, stands for "down.") He then gave us the thrilling incidents of his own conversion. He proclaimed with triumph the unrestrictedness of the saving grace of God. He exclaimed: "Salvation is as free as flowers i' May. An' a Methody can *thoil* his neighbour salvation." That word *thoil* is peculiar to a stretch of hill-country from Yeadon and Great Horton to the wild heaths around Holmfirth. It is one of the

many Danish elements in English speech. It is a genuine Scandinavian word, meaning *right good-will.* The Scandinavian goddess of generosity was named *Theila* — perhaps from the same root as the Greek *thelo*, expressive of eager willingness combined with wishfulness, which, Grimm says, "means, properly, to *seize* with the *mind*," "to take delight in," "it gives prominence to the *motive* element." It is a wonderfully common, characteristic word in the Greek of the New Testament.

In the tract of country I have indicated, of a notably large-hearted and free-handed man it is said, "He's a fearful *thoil* with him," "fearful" meaning *marvellous.* During the agitation when the question of ministerial stipend was popularly discussed, a Great Horton man said to me: "Well, Ah could *thoil* a Minister three hundred a year."

Preston then made a truthful statement of the view entertained by Calvinists, indicating them thus: "There is fowk (folk), *not us as a body*, as says"—(we all know what). His refutation of "limited views of the Atonement" was the most condign and summary I ever heard or read.

He dismissed it with remorseless contempt. He said, "That doctrine's layam o' all fowers (lame of all fours). It desarves turnin' aht (out) o' Eccesall (Eccleshill) Moor t' cawdest daah we hev' next winter, and starvin' starin' stooan dead."

Preston then showed us that it was an essential part of the righteousness of the righteous to win

souls from beneath the frown of God into the sunlight of His smile, and that this blessed work does not belong to preachers only, but is common to all the people of God, and that it is every Christian's privilege and duty to strive "that by all means he may save some," and that in order to this we must become all things to all men. He himself exercised wonderful patience, shrewdness, gentleness, and ingenuity of resource in adapting his modes of approach and attack to the peculiarities of temper and habit of those on whom he had holy and benevolent designs. On this occasion he gave us an account of his success in what seemed to be an almost hopeless case. A neighbour of his, named Willy Hudson, was taken with a critical disease, which confined him to his house. Willy had never been inside a place of worship in his life except on two occasions, first in infancy, to be baptized, and second in early manhood, to be married. It seemed now certain that his third visit to the sanctuary would be as a corpse, when the burial service would be read before his committal to the dust. He professed to be an infidel. Willy was evidently determined to die game, and not discredit his unbelief by accepting the consolations of religion. In this respect he was on a level with Mr. Bradlaugh and Miss Martineau. But he showed what the polemic politician and the mistress of delicious English could not display, a Spartan or Red Indian hardihood. Poor Hudson, being thrown out of work by his disabling ailment, and kept out of work by its long continuance, had

fallen into abject want. But he rudely repelled all the approaches of his sympathetic Christian neighbours. The Wesleyan Methodist minister sought access to him in vain. Preston had never been able to obtain access to him, though he had very often tried. Willy had appeared to place the highest bliss of human nature in eating and drinking, and over-indulgence in both had made him morbidly ill-tempered. Preston saw at once that direct appeal to such a man must be worse than useless—would be casting pearls before swine, and giving that which is holy to the dogs. But what was to be done? Preston could not bear the thought that a neighbour of his should die unsaved.

He told us: "Ah (I) studied an' studied an' studied, an' at last Ah cam' ti t' conclusion 'at Ah s'ud niver get ti Willy's heart, unless I went thruff his stomach"—an acute psychological diagnosis this, whatever may be thought of its physiology. I must premise that a flitch of bacon (popularly called a *flick*) was indispensable to every cottage house-place.

Johan thus pursued his narrative: "So Ah goes ti 't flick, an' Ah cuts a good few slices out o' t' middle. An' t' woife ses to meh: 'Johan, whativer is ta doin' ti t' flick?' I ses, 'Ne'er thee heed, lass; Ah's noan up ti mich mischief, thah may be suer!' So Ah toasts t' baacon, an' Ah duz it as niste as niste (as nice as nice); an' Ah puts it on a waarm plaate wi' a waarm plaate atop on it; an' Ah runs off wei't ti Willy's door."

Now Willy lived in solitary squalor, close bordering on starvation, and his street door, of course, opened directly into the house-place. So Johan, having knocked at the door (to resume his narrative), "strides reet inside, an' shuts t' door; an' Ah lifts t' top-plaate, an' tak's caare ti let him smell t' baacon. An' A—ah ses: 'Willy lad, Ah sees tha's varrah badleh; an' Ah knaws as sick fowk likes a bit o' neist baacon, an' Ah's browt thah a bit.' An' he ses: 'A—ah, Johan lad, Ah's suer, thah's varrah guid.'"

He found the sick man shivering beside a fireless grate. This time he made not the slightest hint about religion or the soul, but beguiled the sufferer by sympathetic questions, by good-natured gossip, "personal talk," and any little scrap of news he thought might 'tice the wilful solitary out of his cold and sullen shell. He listened tenderly to the patient's details of his symptoms and his sufferings. Poor Willy chatted cannily till the repast was ended, and then Johan left him without having asked a blessing or returned thanks, or had the indispensable Methodist "word of prayer," or stave of singing.

On the next visit, Johan strode in with a big coal cobbling on his head, and some slices of bacon wrapped up in nice clean paper in his pocket, a few spoonfuls of tea, a packet of sugar, a home-baked loaf, and a tin of milk. "Well, well lad, haah is ta by this time? Ah thowt I'd like a dish o' tea wi' thah, an' Ah knaws it's n' use axing a man as can hardlins toddle abaht t'

"AH KNAWS AS SICK FOWK LIKES A BIT O' NEIST BAACON."—*p.* 46.

house ti cum tiv his neighbour's, an' thah's nubbody ti see to thah. So Ah wer like to bring a bit o' coil ti boil t' kettle wi' ; an' while t' kettle's boilin', Ah'll be fryin' for mysen and thee, lad, t' bit o' home-fed baacon as shoo (*she*, Preston's wife), hes cutten for us." "A—ah, Johan lad, Ah's fa-an to see thah!" (fa-an, *fain*, right pleased). These visits told perceptibly on Willy Hudson's heart. They became to him both luxuries and necessaries. He felt "lost" if Johan did not drop in at nightfall. By gentle, slow degrees the self-exhaled fog began to lift, the frost began to thaw from Willy's mind and heart. As the rust was rubbed off the so long unused frying-pan, and it began to glow above the so long fireless grate, the corrupting rust fell off his soul, and the cheery flame of hope began to flicker in his heart.

He began to recognise in his cheery, kindly neighbour one of the blessed of the Father, and to say: "I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, I was thirsty and ye gave me drink, I was sick and ye visited me," and even to add "I was in prison and ye came unto me," for surely there is no imprisonment so crushing and corroding as the self-inflicted silent system of a stolid, sullen unbelief.

Will Hudson was himself the first to broach the subject of religion. One night as Johan rose to go, and shook the patient's hand, Will Hudson lifted his eyes to Preston and said: "Why, Johan, Ah thowt tha allus reckoned ti praah wi' t' poor sick fowk ta visits. Istan't bahn to praah wi'

me? Happen (perhaps) ta thinks 'at Ah's past prayin' for." Johan knelt him down, in tears, and prayed in his own native style, till the ex-infidel joined heartily in both prayers and tears.

From that hour he began to amend, both in body and in soul, although the doctors had pronounced his doom, for the disease had been quite as much mental and spiritual as it was corporal. He soon could say like the Psalmist: "I shall not die but live, and declare the works of the Lord." He became "a joined member" of the Wesleyan Methodist Society, and for ten years met in Johan's class, and would laughingly admit that Johan had "found the way to his heart, thruff his stomack."

Willy Hudson, of Yeadon, I did not personally know, but the Methodist Hudsons, of Airedale, one of whom met in the Society-class of which I was the Leader, were, in face and form and intellect, a superior race of men.

Never in his poaching days and nights had Preston exercised such patience and such wariness, such wiliness in snaring the most guarded game as he did in the attempt to win this soul for Christ.

A striking report of a sermon preached by Preston on behalf of the Zion Sunday School, in Holbeck, Leeds, which was connected with the Sunday School Union, appeared in the Leeds monthly organ of the Union.

The surging crowd struggled hard for advan-

tageous places. Seeing that the hale and strong were taking an unfair advantage of their strength to thrust aside the aged, Preston rose and shouted: "Nah then, lads, do gie them gray-haired men and women these seats nearest pooilpit, where they can see and hear t' best."

Preston's text was quite characteristic: "Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon Him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon."

This was a text exactly to John Preston's hand: in its *persuasiveness* and *importunity*, "*Seek ye the Lord . . . call ye* upon Him"; in its *impetuous urgency*, "*while He may* be *found . . . while* He is *near*"; in its demand for *absolute and immediate abandonment* of sin, especially the one that is hardest to give up. And then its gladsome gospel, its exulting and abounding *assurances* of mercy and forgiveness, "He *will* have mercy upon him," . . . He will *abundantly* pardon." This was one of Preston's strongest points—the *plenteousness* of the Divine forgiveness, "a salvation as free as flowers i' May." He would often say, "God never pardons by *instalments*, He forgives *like* a God."

Poor debtors, by our Lord's request
A full acquittance we receive.

The reporter of the Holbeck sermon tells us: "He appealed to all classes of sinners, beginning

with the drunkard. Leaning far over the pulpit, he said, 'Ah me-an thee, poor drunkard! Wheere is ta?'—looking closely through the congregation as if for some particular individual—'wheere *is* ta,

"WHEERE IS TA, POOR DRUNKARD?"

poor drunkard? Thah *mun* quit thee way, thah *mun* indeed, or it'll lead thee dahn. Au've been i' that ro-ad mysen, an' I knaw summat abaht it. Oh, poor drunkard, Ah *pity* thee, Ah *pity* thee! A *drunkard*! It's a *miserable* thing! Wha, he'd give his soul for drink! He'd drink t' tin off his

muther's coffin! Oh, thou *mun* le-ave that way, poor drunkard!' (With great energy.) '*Come out on it!* Oh! if thou wilt but come out of it, Ah doan't care if they *pawse* (kick) meh aht o' Holbeck, I's go hoam agean rejoicin'.' Similar appeals were made to the *infidel*, to the *backslider* ('let him *return* unto the Lord'), and to the *miser*. 'But some fowk ses, A *miser*, Johan! Fowk mun tak' care, thah knows. But, Ah me-an bi a *miser*, a fellow as *will* 'ev money, awther thruff t' gaate or thruff t' hedge.' These appeals were interspersed with a profusion of illustrative anecdotes.

"He inculcated the duty of filial affection. He cried out in a stentorian voice: '"Honour thi fayther and thi muther, that thi days may be long in the land." I wish I could mak' iverybody hear that fro' Johnny Groat's, i' Scotland, ti t' Land's End, i' Cornwall.' All his illustrations were taken from humble life, and very powerfully related. The story of the conversion of Mary, the innkeeper's daughter, had in it touches of genuine pathos. Altogether, the service was a singular specimen of pulpit oratory. It was in the broadest Yorkshire dialect. There can be no question that Johan is a powerful, uneducated preacher. He has natural eloquence; his direct and earnest appeals, his bold figures, his broad humour, and colloquial familiarity, all tend to keep up the attention and to arouse the passions."

The result of these gifts of nature and of grace, so faithfully and energetically applied, was that whenever he was announced to preach he would

crowd the largest chapel in Bradford or in Leeds, and consequently was in high repute and requisition for anniversary occasions within a radius of twenty miles of Yeadon, especially in connection with the Sunday schools. A capital description of him as a preacher appeared three and thirty years after his death, in the *Craven Pioneer*, as one of a spirited series of articles headed *Ticklers*, by *Arty Momus*, who turned out to be no less public a personage than Mr. Miles Ackersley, the popular landlord of the Ship Hotel, Skipton. I give a short extract.

"Some of the readers of the *Craven Pioneer*, doubtless, remember a celebrated local preacher who, many years ago, was often heard in this neighbourhood. He was mostly in the 'Charity Sermon' line. The preacher spoke in the broadest of broad Yorkshire, and many of his apt allusions, quaint and forcible expressions are still remembered. Such was his reputation, that an overflowing congregation might safely be reckoned on whenever he was announced to preach. One of his strong points was to get on terms of familiarity with his hearers. He spoke more like a father talking to his children, than as a preacher to a congregation. His first hymn was :

Let earth an' heaven agree, etc.,

"Then proceeding,

Jesus ! harmonious sound !
The joy of earth an' heaven,
No other help is found,

he would cry out to someone of his congregation: 'An' there needs nooan; does there, Tommy?' To which Tommy would reply: 'Naah, lad.'

"It was no uncommon occurrence for Johan to go amongst the scholars who were 'sitting up in white,' and pat them on the head, with some winsome, laughter-moving observation."

CHAPTER IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF JOHN PRESTON'S GENIUS: STRENGTH, EXUBERANCE, UNCONVENTIONALITY, SPONTANEITY.

IF ever the saying, "a man's style is himself," was true of anyone, it was true of Preston. The impression of his genius which his hearers could not fail to take, was that of wild-grown, rugged strength, with the perennial putting forth of a fruitful yet fantastic and grotesque luxuriance. He stood before us like a "talking oak"; a gnarled and knotted trunk, rock-rooted on the hill of winds, with twisted, tossing branches, and ever-sprouting, twirling twigs, and a prodigality of pranksome leafage and of green-capped acorns. His careless, buoyant energy was irresistible. No man ever answered to the noble lines of Tennyson more clearly or more closely than did this brusque and blithesome John of Yeadon.

> He never sold the truth to serve the hour
>
> * * * * *
>
> Whose life is work: whose language rife,
> With rugged maxims hewn from life.

Like the faith-strong Danite, his wildest freaks were feats, and his mightiest feats seemed freaks; whether he strode up the steep hillside with Gaza's gates upon his back, or tied the firebrands to the crouching foxes' tails. Like some deft and daring painter, with a few bold strokes or dashes he would set before us a character or scene or situation, or would streak with foam the horse's lips by the reckless flinging of his brush.

If John Preston had begun to preach in his eighteenth year instead of waiting till his forty-eighth year, he must have attained at least Connexional celebrity.

Some of Johan's preliminary pulpit confidences were piquant beyond measure, especially those in which "t' woife" was an important figure. The late eloquent W. O. Booth, one of the most popular young preachers of the day, was a native of the neighbourhood, and had come from Manchester to preach Anniversary sermons at Eccleshill. John Preston was in great request for Sunday afternoon services on such occasions, as he was sure both to fill the chapel and to keep the audience awake. Mr. Booth, rejoicing in the opportunity of hearing Preston preach, made his way to the chapel in good time, but found a huge overflow of people at the front, and was fain to claim privilege of clergy by entering through the preachers' vestry. When Johan caught sight of the young pulpit orator, he instantly exclaimed, "Nah, lad, I'se noan bahnd to heh thee afore meh all t' time!" Mr. Booth protested that he would not be debarred the pleasure

of hearing Preston preach. "Well then," said Johan, "thah mun sit behind meh i' t' pulpit."

This was, in fact, but Hobson's choice, for the place was packed, and the pulpit steps so thronged, that the preacher and his expectant hearer had no small difficulty in securing right of way. It must be premised that the West Riding introduction to a confidential communication is: "Ye mind"; that when John Preston was in a brown study his oracle was the kitchen fire; and that the verb "snodden" and the noun "snod" are akin to the word "snood," as applied to a neat, smooth, graceful covering for the head of a devoted nun, and the former means to make smooth or neat; and that "fleared" is a West Riding word for *frightened.* Before reading out his text John Preston paused significantly, and said: "Ye mind, all t' week, t' woife's been cummin' to me an' sayin', 'Johan, what does ta sit luikin' inti t' fire i' that uns* for? It's that lad, Oliver Boith, tha's fleeard on!' An' Ah says, 'Ay, lass, thah knaws Ah can't preach like Oliver Boith.' 'Naah,' shoo says, 'an' Oliver Boith can't preach like thee.' Hahivver, I'se nobbut gie y' it a bit rough, ye knaw, an' I'se le-ave this lad here" (pointing over his shoulder) "to snodden it." Then, glancing over his shoulder, he said to Mr. Booth: "An' a bonnie job thah'll hev, lad!"

On another occasion, before giving out his text, he looked piteously at his hearers and said: "Ye mind, I hope I s'all hev a better time wi' this text

* In that way.

nor I had t' last time I tackled it. It wer at 'Cacia Cot" (Acacia Cot, the pretty residence at that time of a distinguished Bradford Methodist, Mr. Fawcett, afterwards of Mr. Milligan, M.P., where a room was fitted up as a preaching-place); "T' woife wer wi' meh, an' I says til her as we walked back up t' loin, 'It didn't goah varry weel, lass, to-neet.' An' shoo says, 'Goah, mun! it mudn't weel goah: thah niver got it on its feet'" ("Go, man! it might well not go: you never got it on its feet").

It must not be supposed that Preston's popularity was confined to the speakers of his own dialect. So far as I could learn, there were no two opinions as to Preston's preaching powers. Ex-President George Morley, who during a long and distinguished ministerial career, many years of which were spent in London, heard almost all the greatest preachers of his time, spoke with enthusiastic admiration of Preston's pulpit power. The masters at Woodhouse Grove School, from the headmaster downwards, were amongst his most delighted listeners. When he preached one of the opening sermons of Oxford Place chapel, Leeds, although those familiar with his preaching could see that he was "raytherly dafted," a little embarrassed and restrained, yet the able ministers who heard him for the first time expressed their wonder and delight. With the "Preachers'" sons at Woodhouse Grove he was the most welcome occupant of the pulpit. When a fresh "plan" came out the first enquiry was, "When shall we have Johan?" The pulpit, as Dr. Arnold, Dr.

Vaughan, and others knew so well, must ever be a most powerful educative factor. Dull, dry, conventional preaching has a most distressing and repellent influence on boys and girls. And my conviction, based not only on experience, is that in preaching either to the old or young, the learned or the illiterate, direct rustic point and power and fervour are far to be preferred to a trim-level of respectable mediocrity, smoothed by the heavy garden-roller of conventional propriety. And a rough or even rude vernacular is more effective in the pulpit than a stilted and stuck-up grandiloquence.

This, at any rate, was notably the case with the children of the prophets, who sometimes listened to John Preston, and never without the most alert and animated interest. His rough, but rich and racy, utterances were luxuriously laughed over, but never were laughed *at*. On the other hand, affectation, pedantry, pretension in a preacher of the Gospel were felt to be fair game. Of this I met with an amusing instance in the case of a highly respectable and much respected minister, who laboured in the Woodhouse Grove Circuit. Twenty years after he had left it, I was chatting with him in the lobby of the Conference Chapel, when up came another ex-Grove pupil, who also was attending Conference. (Such is the longevity of rogueism, and its grim tenacity of life, that he still survives!) Up he strides to our old pastor, and without saying grace, began in the most brusque, unceremonious fashion: "Oh, Mr. ——, and how are you by this time?"

Mr. ——, who was the last man to accost another in such an off-hand way—as he used to say, "without further exordium"—and had probably never before been so addressed, drew himself up with dignity, and responded: "Sir, you have the advantage of me. I can't recall ever having enjoyed the honour of your acquaintance." Whereupon the minister's son, now himself a minister, exclaimed: "Oh! Mr. ——, what Grove lad can forget you? You know, you always used to talk to us about 'overt acts of turpitude,' so, of course, we always called you '*Bees' Wax and Turpentine.*'" It was pathetically plain that this mahogany polish had been wasted on this article of educational upholstery.

I never heard a syllable from Preston's lips which in the slightest savoured of irreverence; yet for two intervals, of more than a year's duration each, he was, as I and many others think, most injudiciously excluded from the Woodhouse Grove pulpit. The first embargo had no relation to his archaic English. He was in the same condemnation with a distinguished linguist, mathematician, encyclopædist, and man of science and of letters, the eccentric but immensely capable head-master of the school, Samuel Ebenezer Parker. The head and front of their offending was their intense revivalism.

But when Mr. Parker left the school, Preston was once more allowed to take his turn in the Grove pulpit, all dread of an unmanageable revival having passed away. But by and by some mem-

bers of the school committee, fearing that John Preston's humour might impair our sense of reverence, and that his provincialisms might debase our English, secured a resolution once more excluding from the pulpit the most popular and telling preacher on the Plan. This second snubbing Preston, with his ingrained simplicity and nobleness, took altogether in good part and with perfect equanimity and pleasantness. But one Sunday evening the Yeadon local-preacher who was appointed, being suddenly taken ill, sent for Johan, who, for a wonder, happened to be that night without appointment, showed him the Plan, by which it was demonstrated that every other local preacher within reach had an appointment of his own, and proved that unless Johan undertook it, he would either have to run the risk of a very serious illness, or leave preacherless the most important congregation between Yeadon and Bradford. Johan's good nature could not face either one horn of the dilemma or the other, so, without more ado, he strides off to "t' Grooav'." He gave out the hymns and prayed and read the Scripture lessons in the only way that was possible to him—with irresistible momentum, and with all the Prestonality of Preston. He was too great a man either to object, as any smaller man would naturally have done—"Oh, but you forget that the Grove Committee have forbidden me that pulpit"—or even to make the slightest allusion to the embargo, which might seem to betray a hurt or discontented feeling. He contented himself with

just stating the circumstances, and adding: "So, ye see, I were like to come!"

This use of the adjective *like* is remarkably significant and serviceable. It expresses in four letters the whole phrase: "It is *meet*, right, and our bounden duty." As then employed by Preston, it implied still further: "It would have been very bad taste in me not to come."

Before giving out his text, John Preston said: "Just as I got ti t' pulpit steps, Miles there"—pointing to the gruff chapel-keeper, Miles Walmsley—"gave meh a dig inti t' ribs, and said, 'Johan, *thah moan't mak' t' lads laugh.*' Well, wee's try to behave wersens as well as weh can." He, accordingly, restrained his humour to the utmost, and gave a very solemn and affecting sermon. At the close of his discourse he made a direct appeal to the preachers' sons, who sat *en bloc* in the body of the chapel. With wondrous consciousness of power, he made a request of them which was altogether unprecedented, and which my twelve years' familiarity with, and loving study of, the Grove-lad nature convinces me that no other man would ever have succeeded in preferring, unless it were Dr. Robert Newton, whose magnificent personality and unbounded popularity were all but irresistible.

Looking the sons of the prophets tenderly in the face, he said: "Nah, lads, this is t' last time as iver Ah shall preach ti ye, an' Ah've summat ti say ti *ye*; and Ah s'ud like ye all ti stand up." Instantly the whole hundred boys rose to their feet *en masse*, and looked up at the uncultured,

unauthoritative man with an expectant, deferential gaze. So he said: "Nah, lads, ye've hed a good edycation; mind ye dusn't despise them as hesn't. An' most on ye is like to get on i' t' world, if ye behave owt like; an' when t' Lord blesses you i' your basket and your store, mind ye don't forget t' owd man, t' supernumery, your feyther."

It was a memorable triumph of rough, uncultured genius and character. And, assuredly, in this appeal he didn't *mak' t' lads laugh.* On the contrary, I have seen some of them who have themselves "getten on i' t' world" recall the exhortation with gleaming yet tear-dimmed eyes. Preston, having finished his succinct appeal, waved his hand with respectful dignity, in token that the boys might take their seats, gave out his concluding hymn, followed by a short prayer that God would "bless the lads," and pronounced the benediction; and then one of the most genuine, God-authenticated preachers that ever "clomb" those pulpit-steps strode down them for the last time. Of those boys, a large proportion became able ministers of the New Testament, and others are conspicuous answers to the most frequent prayer that was offered for us all: that we might be "ornaments to civil and religious society."

Another element of John Preston's eloquence was *suddenness*, or surprisingness. I can imagine no description so apt and adequate of this factor as that which is supplied by Lord Tennyson's lyric "The Brook"—

I make a sudden sally ;

I wind about, and in and out,
With here a blossom sailing,

* * * * *

I *slip*, I *slide*, I *gloom*, I *glance*,
Among the skimming swallows ;
I make the netted sunbeams dance.

Of a truth, the rustic current of John Preston's eloquence did "wind about and in and out," and that wholly at its "own sweet will," and with many a woodland "blossom sailing." And he did "gloom and glance" alternately. And no one else I ever heard could "make the *netted sunbeams dance*," as he did.

Another charm of Preston's preaching was *surprisingness.* In sooth, he made many "a sudden sally." Akin to this was his *absolute individuality and uniqueness.* The only word by which one could describe John Preston's style and personality is the word *Prestonian.* Yorkshire is by eminence the county of strongly marked personalities, and Preston's personality was one of the most definite and decisive that I ever met with. As he imitated no man, so he baffled imitation. No one ventured to infringe his patent, or essayed to bend his bow. He was profoundly simple, and, of necessity, *original.*

Yet he bowed to Holy Scripture with absolute reverence and trust ; and theologians and commentators, even the highest of them, he subjected to that one unfailing test. I heard him say with

energy: "I'll be bound to no man's *ipsey dixy*" (*ipse dixit*). The epithet he always gave to his chief authorities, Fletcher, Clarke, and Benson, was characteristic of his tone of mind. He never said the *great* John Fletcher, or the learned Dr. Clarke, but always "highly favoured Fletcher," or "highly favoured Clarke," and always with an upward look of reverent thankfulness. Sometimes, in his impetuosity of utterance, he would make a slip which might be deemed suggestive: such as "highly *fl*avoured Fletcher."

I heard him say when preaching on entire sanctification: "Highly favoured Clarke observes 'God will destroy the kingdom of Satan, and build His own on the ruins thereof.' But I reckon He'll do nowt o' t' sooart. He'll clear away the varrah rubbish, and not le-ave a stick or a stoan belonging to the devil in His children or His Church."

It must be admitted that too many of the Yeadoners let their individuality *run to seed*, till it became an uncouth and even "ill-convenient" individualism. Thus, in times of agitation the Methodist Society in Yeadon became no longer "a city compact together," or "at unity with itself"; but like the topographic Yeadon, which, as we have shown, was in the time of Preston's greatest strength the most unstratified, the most higgledy-piggledy, the most "promisc'ous-like" construction that I ever saw "in my born days," or, as far as I can "mind," in any previous state of existence.

But of this overweening individualism John

Preston showed no trace. He was Connexional and constitutional to the very core. During the disturbance and secession of 1835-6, I heard him say from the pulpit: "Ha, friends, but I do *luvv* Methodism; I luvv its doctrine, an' I luvv its *discipline*. It fits meh as weel as my coit" (coat), grasping the free and flapping broadcloth which was, not unlikely, of his own weaving. It was obviously not a very *tight* fit, but gave free play to his well-developed muscles, and to his strong and bounding pulses.

An effective part of Preston's native apparatus for the generating and the sending forth of electric light and force, was his *vivid sensibility*. He was, I think, the most response-evoking speaker that I ever listened to; and that because he was himself one of the most responsive natures in the world. The first time I ever saw him, not then knowing who he was, was at the opening of the new chapel at Woodhouse Grove. The preacher was the highly-favoured Dr. Robert Newton. The building was so crowded that nearly all the pupils were bestowed in the yet doorless vestries, and it was my good hap to be "planted unco' right," just in the very doorway, so as to command the eye-sweep of almost the whole excited mass, and of the magnificent form and the fine feature-play, and the majestic attitude and action, of one of the noblest speakers of his time. Right in front of the preacher, on a form between the pews and the pulpit, sat a very striking figure, which I afterwards learnt to be no other than John Preston. The text was: "In

all places where I record My name, there will I come unto you, and I will bless you."

The most powerful part of the discourse was the comment on our Lord's allusion to the text, in His blessed assurance: "Wherever two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them." As the great preacher rolled out, as in the tones of some cathedral organ, such sentiments as these: "However humble the place, however homely the preacher, Christ's presence is the consecration of the place, and the sanctification of the service," Preston, who had been nursing his left leg upon his right knee, and swaying to and fro with excess of feeling, half sobbed and half shouted: "Ay, Robbard, that's it!" For a moment the congregation seemed to feel as if too great a liberty were taken with a man so grand as Robert Newton, and as if the loftiness of the strain of eloquence had been lowered. But the great orator made a graceful bend of his noble person, and stretched forth his arm and hand towards his quivering interrupter, and exclaimed: "Yes, my good brother, *that is it!*" and broke forth into a fresh expatiation. The Rev. Thomas Derry, who was present, says: "The thrill of feeling seemed to penetrate every chink of the chapel."

Again, John Preston's preaching owed its wonderful effectiveness, to a very great extent, to the *urgency* of his appeals. His motto was:

> *This* is the time; no *more* delay!
> *This* is the acceptable day,
> Come in, *this moment*, at His call.

"AY, ROBBARD, THAT'S IT!"—*p.* 68.

He was very strong upon the absurdity of the idea that one could indefinitely retain a resisted conviction. I heard him say: "Conviction runs off o' fowk's mind like watter off a duck's back."

Another secret of the charm which John Preston cast upon his hearers was his fidelity to Wesley's rule: "Always begin and end at the time." When once he "got his sermon on its feet," he *got over the ground* with an onward-bearing and exhilarating impetus. He did not saunter leisurely like "an abbot on an ambling pad"; he went *ahead* like some mounted messenger on "the King's business, which requireth haste." The people used to say: "It's grand to see Johan's horse run away with him." They used to call his preaching very "moreish," since he always let them "leave off with an appetite."

Preston's ordinary action in the pulpit was jerky and spasmodic—never graceful—and at times grotesque. He was a very odd reciter of a piece of poetry. His voice was strong and on a high pitch, and his words were "winged words." When he had fairly "got agait," his sentences would come flashing from his lips like a feathered shaft "shot by an archer strong," and they came straight home with quivering impact, and struck deep into the memory and heart.

But in John Preston's preaching there was no touch of the hysterical or histrionic. He never laughed at his own humour, nor choked with his own pathetic tenderness.

CHAPTER V.

PRESTON'S TENDERNESS AND HUMOUR.—REVIVALISM.

A MARKED feature of the true evangelist in Preston's character was a robust and manly *tenderness*. It was sweet to hear him dwell upon the motherliness which the Church should ever manifest in its treatment of young converts.

It must be noted that where an ordinary English mother calls her little one "my dear," a Northumbrian housewife would say "honey," or "hinnie"; a Yorkshire cottager would say "joy," or, if the child were very little, "doy." It must also be noted that in the hill country of Yorkshire and Lancashire the rustic word for *kick* is *pawse* (? *poise*). I heard Preston, in pleading for tenderness in the treatment of young converts, say: "When t' woife's leearnin' t' bairns to walk, if won on 'em happens to tummel, sho doesn't pawse it on to t' doorson (door-stone). Naah, she runs to it, and lifts it up, and says: 'Soo-ah, doy; get up, doy; try *ageean*, doy; *there's a doy!*'"

Wilkie had not a truer power of painting an

ordinary home-scene in a Scottish kitchen than Preston had in rough-sketching an ordinary Yorkshire house-place.

Of course, John Preston's humour, irresistible as it was irrepressible, contributed no little to his popularity. At times, the effect of his ideal pictures was comic in the extreme. It so happened that the chief musician at the Grove Chapel, who played the violoncello, was very exceptionally long-limbed, and still more exceptionally long-faced. Sitting in the singing-pew and absorbed in Preston's picture of the publican and Pharisee praying in the temple, the entranced player on an instrument, whose fiddle ordinarily rested by his side whilst he was listening to the Word, seized his instrument to move it out of his way that he might hear with eyes as well as ears the man who preached with his eyes and face as well as tongue ; and, with eager, upturned gaze and open mouth, was drinking in the Word, when Preston said, with a prolongation of his syllables wonderful to note : "And there stood the Pharisee wi' a *faace* abaht *as long* as a *fiddle*!" Instantly the eyes of the whole congregation turned towards and were fastened on the elongated physiognomy of the musician, and could not refrain from a comparative measurement of the face and fiddle, which strongly emphasised the aptness and expressiveness of Preston's illustration.

But, like most other humorists, as we have seen, Preston had a deep, rich vein of tenderness running side by side with his wit and whimsicality.

Few lyrics in the language have a truer or more touching tone of yearning, manful sympathy than the philanthropic songs of Thomas Hood, and his exquisite death scene, "We watched her breathing through the night," etc.; and the grim, weird pathos of his *Dream of Eugene Aram.* What satiric drollery could be more daringly outrageous than Frederick Locker Lampson's *London Lyrics*? And yet what thrilling, quivering notes he ever and anon flings forth from the sentient harp-strings of a Comus or a Momus! How touching, for example, is his ode, "It might have been"!

And of John Preston's preaching it may be said, as Dobson says of Locker's poetry, "It wavered 'twixt a smile and tear." I have heard very few speakers who so filled up the ideal of an orator, which was given me by my old friend, Herbert, of Nottingham, as did the rough John Preston: "A speaker who can *make you laugh or cry, or drive you crazy.*" Preston's humour was as pleasant to the mental palate of the lads as the wholesome acid of the sorrel in the fields and woods. His affectionateness was very winning. I can never forget the feeling with which he commented on Jacob's estimate of the loss of children as the lowest depth of human sorrow: "If I be bereaved of my *children*, I *am* bereaved." In that part of Yorkshire the verb "aim" is often used to express intense desire, and Preston said, "Ha, friends, I aim to have *all* my children following me to heaven; and, please God, to follow me in my coffin to the grave." During a terrible

"A FAACE ABAHT AS LONG AS A FIDDLE."—*p.* 73.

revulsion of trade in the district, when great numbers were out of work—"*laking*," as it was euphemistically called by artisans—Preston and his wife and family almost starved themselves to death to keep their neighbours from starvation. At the death-bed he was as welcome as the angel Raphael to the blind and helpless Tobit; hence, he found himself installed into a sort of informal and unfeed clinical chaplaincy. "We's have to send for Johan," became a kind of formula when an illness was thought critical. And so his self-wove broadcloth became a heavenlier vestment than the richest "sacerdotal stole."

Preston was not seldom spoken of as "a diamond in the rough." But he was not an *uncut* diamond. A diamond he clearly was, especially in gleaming pellucidity. But the hand of the Divine Lapidary had cut him into flashing facets, in such angles as to produce the freest play of gleam and colouring. To me, and I should think to most, one of his strongest spells was his utter *naturalness*. And the sense in which the word *natur'* was used in that locality, namely, *substance*, *truth of texture*, was perfectly applicable to Johan's preaching. Johan was what was then called a "piece-maker," that is to say, a hand-loom, house-loom weaver, who was at once master and man, employer and employed, capitalist and workman, rolled up into one. This position in the manufacturing world was somewhat analogous to that of a small freeholder in the agricultural world. Having woven and prepared his piece of cloth of

the prescribed dimensions, he would present it for sale in the cloth hall.

Assuredly, John Preston was a blessed peace-maker, as well as a skilled and honest piece-maker. And it could not be said of either his cloth or his preaching, as the cloth-critics used to say of a "piece" of work which they *felt* to be of flimsy texture, "There's no *natur*'" in it—no substance or solidity; for of Preston's preaching it might most truthfully be said, "'Tis nature all," and it was full of pith and matter. "His native wood-notes wild" were as significant and as distinctive as the woodpigeon's brooding coo, the rook's contented caw, the cuckoo's call, or the owl's "tu-whit, tu-who; a merry note." "There are, I suppose, so many voices in the world, and none of them without signification," was said by one of the mightiest voices that the world has ever listened to. Of a truth, there was "a distinction in the sound" whenever Preston put his rustic reed to those heaven-taught lips. And many a ringing descant have I heard from him which proved of wondrous potency—

> To draw the ardent will,
> Its destiny of goodness to fulfil.

Everyone who had ever heard Preston preach, and went to hear again, was sure of one thing—there would be nothing weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable. All knew that the entire service, from first to last, from the opening hymn to the concluding prayer, would be spirited and inspiriting;

fresh as the matins of the mounting lark. For *salience* was one of Preston's foremost features. His preaching was made up of *points*, and it was full of power *and full of matter*. He might safely have adopted the rendering of Psalm xlv.: "My heart is *bubbling up* a *good matter*"; for though his teachings came gurgling, gushing up from the depths of his strong rich nature, yet it was an illustration of the inspired Proverb: "The wellspring of wisdom is a flowing brook." He might also say with the prophet: "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I might speak a word in season to him that is weary"; or even the Apostolic protest: "Though rude in speech, yet not in knowledge." For, in the first place, though, of course, not widely read, and with little more of culture than the golden gorse or purple heath of his native hills and moors, or the wayside "flowers i' May" which he considered as the emblems of the common salvation, and which is "priceless because it is above all price," yet he was steeped in Scripture, and had Wesleyan Methodist theology at his fingers' ends, and at his heart's core. His great master was John Fletcher. Hence his preaching was wonderfully well-balanced and both-sided. In this respect he and Starkey, the Yeadon local-preacher who came next to him in popularity and power, were very like. It would have been worth the while of any preacher or divine to hear the sermon preached by Starkey at the Woodhouse Grove chapel, from—"Behold now the goodness and the severity of

God! towards them that fell severity; but towards thee goodness, if thou *continue in His goodness*."

Johan Preston's preaching was most notably *Johannean* in its combined tremendousness and tenderness; for he was a "son of thunder," and yet an apostle and evangelist of love. It is a singular fact that, in speaking of or speaking to him, the name John was perceptibly pronounced differently than in any other case. *John* was commonly pronounced as if it were a blending of the ordinary English Joe and John, the *o* being sounded as in *J*o*seph*. But in every other instance that came within my hearing, it still remained a monosyllable. In Johan Preston's case it was distinctly a dissyllable. And yet it was not pronounced like the mediæval woman's name, as in Joan of Arc, the contraction of Johannah. But the aspirate, so little heeded by most Yorkshiremen, received a compensating emphasis.

So all Yeadon was right-proud of its most popular and useful scion; and, better still, was fond of him. And to all fastidious objections to his audacious humour and "rackety" revivalism, it was felt to be an all-sufficing answer: "Ha! but it wouldn't be Johan *behaht* (without) that." As much as to say: "Please don't put a tinkering finger on Johan Preston. It's *Johan* we *love*, and Johan we want—Johan just as he is, and nothing else. If ye 'mell on him' (meddle with him) ye'll nobbut spoil him." Johan's keen common-sense, his familiarity with Scripture and with Wesleyan Methodist literature, and his genuine humour,

enabled him to brush away the cobwebs of anti-evangelical sophistication which might happen to be floating in the atmosphere. Soon after Dr. Hook began his clerical campaign in Leeds, I heard Preston say, in Woodhouse Grove pulpit: "They've getten a rare big word up o' latleh (of late). Ah don't knaw whether Ah can hardline jaw it (whether I can hardly pronounce it), but Ah knaws weel eniff (well enough) what it means. It means 'at such as me an' Aby Wade there hesn't got no call to preach." Abraham Wade was a very simple local preacher, who happened to be there. Preston then began to spell this crack-jaw phrase. Johan met the difficulty thus: A-p, o, s—*Apos*; t, o—to—*A-posto*; l, i—*li*—*Apostoli*; c, a, l—*cal* (putting his right hand beneath his under-jaw, to prevent its dislocation)—*Apostolical.* S, u, c—*suc*; c, e, s—*ces*: *success*; s, i—*si*: *successi*: o, n—*on* (then putting his left hand underneath the other jaw, for collateral security)—*Succession.* Apostolical succession. Weel, for that matter, I'se niver be hanged, nor burnt nawther, for preachin'. Ah niver could leearn haw. But Ah tell ye what it is, friends—

> What we have felt an' seen,
> With confidence we tell;
> And publish to the sons of men
> The signs infallible."

Preston was too fair-minded and too noble to drag party politics into his preaching, much less into his prayers. But he strove to allay the

fanaticism of party by the spirit of a sound mind. During the excitement of a memorable contest for the representation of the West Riding, I heard him pray: "Lord, some of us is sayin', 'If t' Blues get in thaah'll lowse us' (*loose* us, *set us free* from all our social grievances and political enthralments); other some is sayin', 'If t' Yallers get in thaah'll lowse us.' But, O Lord, Theh'll hev to lowse us, or else we's ne'er be lowsed at all. 'Give us help from trouble, for vain is the help of man!'"

During a later contest, when preaching at Shipley, he prayed: "O Lord, bless t' Blues, an' bless t' Yallers an' all, an' grant 'at nawther on 'em may forget the laws an' rights of King Jesus."

The revivals at Yeadon in 1806 and 1833 were so remarkable as to claim a place in the standard histories of modern Methodism (see especially Dr. George Smith's *History of Methodism*, vol. iii.). But some highly significant details have, of course, escaped the notice of a resident in distant Cornwall. These details I received from the resident minister at the time, the Rev. S. Wilde, and from the leading class-leaders and local preachers of the place. The cholera, at its first visit to this country, in 1832, was very fatal in the neighbourhood of Yeadon, and a noonday prayer-meeting was instituted in order to entreat, first the Divine blessing on the visitation, and then its merciful withdrawal. This prayer-meeting proved so beneficial that seven of the local preachers kept it up for more than a year after the departure

of the noisome pestilence. Towards the close of 1833, a great work of conviction suddenly and simultaneously began at Yeadon and its neighbour-village Rawdon, the phenomena of which bore a remarkable resemblance to those of 1806, but were still more striking. It began in Yeadon Street, at a feast time. A mountebank was performing in the centre of a crowd, accompanied by a musician. The latter was suddenly seized with an overwhelming conviction of sin; dropped his instrument and fell upon his knees in the road, and began to cry for mercy in the most heart-rending tones. The nearest men of prayer were immediately fetched. Thus the first revival prayer-meeting was held in the open street of Yeadon.

At the same time two weavers were at work in the same room, at Rawdon, when one of them suddenly dropped upon his knees in an agony of penitence.

Here, too, the Methodist neighbours were called in, and the result was a mighty turning to the Lord. "Such was the number of the penitents," wrote the minister, "and the depth of distress in which many of them were, that for some time we were obliged to hold a prayer-meeting in the chapel from morning until night. In the three contiguous villages more than 950 souls were added to the Church." It was my privilege to visit Yeadon several times during this mighty down-pour of the Spirit. Almost the entire population seemed brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. It was a common saying in the

neighbourhood: "Iverybody i' Yidden awther is a Methody, or *aims* to be afore he dies."

Before this time, evangelical religion seemed to be in a beleagured state, between Atheistic socialism on the one hand, and, even at that early period, High Anglicanism on the other. I attended a lovefeast, where a man from Yeadon testified to the glorious scenes that he witnessed during the revival. He finished his description by shouting out to Preston, who was sitting in the opposite gallery: "Ah tell the what, Johan; t' stoan 'at were cut aht at mountain is rowlin', an' rowlin', an' rowlin'; an' if infidelity an' prophaanness an' Puseyisn dusn't get aht o' t' gait, it'll grind 'em to powther." The associating "Puseyism" with "infidelity and prophaanness" was not very complimentary to the Tractarian movement. But it showed the popular estimate of its tendency. Strange to say, this was one of the very earliest instances that I ever heard of the designation of that movement by Dr. Pusey's name. Shortly afterwards it began to be known in evangelistic circles under the more accurate title of *Newmania*.

It was my privilege to visit Yeadon several times during the revival of 1834, and I can best describe the state of things in the language of the psalm: "The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The right hand of the Lord is exalted: the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly" (Psalm cxviii. 15, 16). And "Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and

having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth *this, which ye now see and hear.*"

During this memorable visitation I heard John Preston preach. He found it necessary to reply to cavilling criticisms on the glorious work of God. It is necessary to explain, first, some of the terms employed. Two of these, *snim* and *snj*, I never heard outside a radius of three miles from Yeadon. The first clue to its meaning lies in the first two letters of both words, so suggestive of a nasal reference. The sound "sn" must come through the nostrils. It is, therefore, easily explicable why a large proportion of monosyllables referring to the nostrils should begin with a nasal sound. Such are the words, *sneer*, sniff, snuff, snort.* It is necessary to premise that the Yeadon *snim* is equivalent to the Scottish *snell*, which is familiar to the readers of Burns' poetry, and means *bitter and biting*.

The word "mense," as meaning manners, order, and *propriety*, is one of the many words that are common to the Scotchman and the Yorkshireman, and recurs in the poetry of Robert Burns. In my native Cleveland, if any self-respecting person is urged to do anything which is regarded as not quite the thing, the reply is: "Oh, no! I *must save my mense*" (manners). Thus, a *menseful revival* means a mannerly, orderly, and decorous revival.

"Till," "tull," "tiv," all mean "to." "Brayin' t' woife" means, of course, *beating* the wife with might and main, according to the use of the word

* Also snarl, snout, snore.

in Prov. xxvii. 22—"Though thou shouldest *bray* a fool in a mortar among wheat with a pestle," etc. "*T' brass*"—the money—is, of course, equivalent to the "coppers"; the Scottish "siller," or the old and still used "yellow boys," to say nothing of the slang word "tin."

Preston said: "T' other daah a man cam' up to me as *snim* an' as *sny* as ye please. He looked at meh like a dog at a pickfork (pitchfork), an' he says: 'Johan, thah luvvs a rackit'; an' Ah says: 'Aw, lad, Ah *dus that*; but noan for a rackit's saake.' 'Weel, weel, Johan,' says he, 'I'se no objections tiv a revival, but Ah could like a *menseful* revival.' 'Weel, lad, then,' says I, 'a man cums into wun of our meetin's, a riff-raff feller, 'at's good till iverything 'at's nowt. He gets convinced, an' I promise ye he mak's a fearful rackit. He roars like a be-ar at a stake. But he gets converted. He works hard all t' week. Seturdah, 't neet, 'stead o' goin' off ti t' public-house, an' cumin' hoame drunk, an' *brayin'* t' woife, he bangs her dahn t' brass. Sundah 't morn he dons him, and tak's his bairns to chapil wi' him. What can be *mensefuller* nor that, think ye? Isn't that a *menseful* revival? "The fruit of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance for ever."' 'Ay, but,' says he, 'I'll tell thah what I've noticed, Johan: when a stream mak's si mich noise it's allus varrah shaller.' 'An',' says I, 'Ah'll tell ye what I've noticed: when a stream runs si varrah still, if ye tak' a stick an' poke it, there's allus a nasty sedimen' at th' borrom'" (bottom).

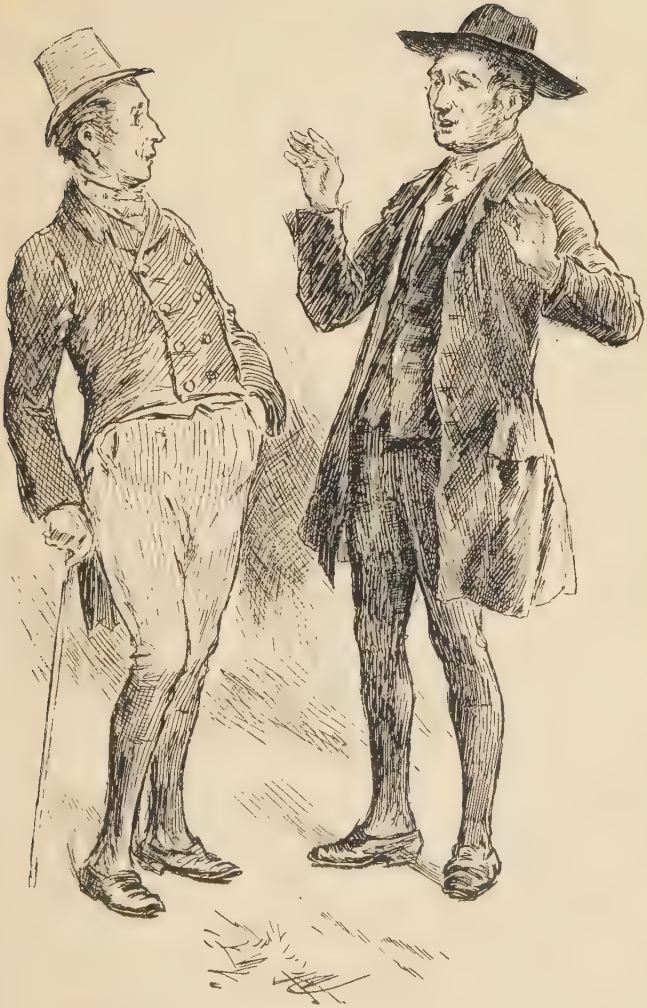
Thus Johan could always meet fault-finding with argument, and satiric simile with counter-simile. And this was one of Johan's special gifts. He was unfailing in reply. He could always give a Roland for an Oliver, and could always refute a sophism at sight and at shot.

The village witlings were fond of showing off their smartness by putting to the preachers whom they happened to meet what they fancied to be posing questions in theology. These questions generally took their instigator as their theme. Johan always proved too many for these theological examiners. "How old is t' divil, Johan, thinks ta?" enquired a wayside witling. "He is of age, ask him," replied the local preacher. Another stopped Preston on the road and asked, with a look of wonderment, "Eh, Johan, hes ta he-ard?" "What, lad?" said Preston pleasantly. "Why, t' divil's de-ad!" said the scoffer. Johan threw up his hands, and in a pathetic tone exclaimed: "Ha, lad! then thah's a poor, feytherless bairn!"

Because John Preston was such a thoroughbred Wesleyan Methodist (not *although*, as some would misleadingly express it) his catholicity was boundless. He hailed the movement which resulted in the Evangelical Alliance; but he saw clearly the only method and the only force by which a true and sound *amalgamation* of the Churches could be brought to pass. His impromptu humour and his "smittle" (*contagious*, catching) enthusiasm naturally brought him into rather wide request as a

speaker at the Missionary meetings. At a Missionary meeting at Addingham, Mr. (now Sir) Isaac Holden being in the chair, the foregoing speaker, being "not us, as a body," *i.e.*, belonging to another Christian denomination, had been deploring the feuds and fault-findings which estranged the Churches from each other. Preston took up the pleasing parable, on this wise: "We s' nivver stoke *wersens* into one lump. It's t' heavenly fireman as mun (must) do that. As Ah were cumin' along t' ro-ad Ah seed a blacksmith hard at work. He'd getten two bits of iron as he wanted to join together. But they were as cawd as some of us is. Nah, if he gat agait o' hammerin', he mud a' hammered hissen to de-ath. But he put 'em both inti t' fire, an' when the' were both white hot he put 'em together, an' then made one on 'em suin eniff" (soon enough).

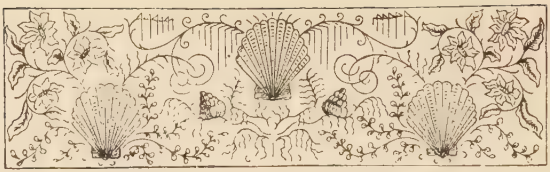
The directness and urgency of Preston's preaching was, of course, a mighty factor in his most effective evangelism. I can never forget hearing, at Woodhouse Grove, John Preston's exposition of "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," combined with, "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, and reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground." In showing the ideal idiotcy of any spiritual mistake, by transferring it to the earthly sphere, he always made himself the hypothetic fool thus: "If I was to go to Rumble's Moor"—(Rombold's Moor, near Ilkley)—"wi' a bagful o' grain, an' start o' scatterin' it emeng t' furze and bilberry bushes, why ye say, 'Johan, what a



"HA, LAD! THEN THAH'S A POOR, FEYTHERLESS BAIRN!"—*p.* 86.

foil (fool) thah art!'" But, I think, the most powerful part of the appeal came when he transferred the simile to his own trade, in this wise: "Ivery wun on ye knaws as Johan Preston's nobbut a weyver, same as iver si mony moore on ye. But hoppen sum o' ye doesn't knaw as ye're all weyvers; an' ye're weyvers as works 'ard all t' week—Sundahs an' all—an' ye're all weyvin' hard while ye sit there listenin' to meh. An' ye'll hev' to tak' your piece tiv a bigger cloth-hall nor Leeds Cloth-Hall. An' what's moore, ye'll heh to lap (wrap) yoursens up in it, an' weear it to all eternity. 'Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man' *weaveth*, that shall he also *wear*."

One week evening, whilst preaching at Greengates, not far from the George and Dragon, he saw one of his old pals creeping in; so he cried, "Hey, Will, lad! is that thee? Hah mony years is it, thinks ta, sin' Ah plumped dahn my full point o' ale at th' George and Dragon?" A tailor in the congregation muttered audibly, "Ah wish thah'd stick ti thy text, Johan." "Thee bide a bit, lad," said Johan, "while t' preychin's dun, an' then Ah'll tackle thee." But the tailor thought discretion the better part of valour, so slunk out during the concluding prayer, having evidently not the slightest wish to figure as *Sartor Resartus*, the tailor *retailed*.



CHAPTER VI.

LAST YEARS—DEATH.

PRESTON was a mighty man in a lovefeast. Like many another Yeadoner, he made very light of a ten miles' walk to attend one of these genial gatherings of the godly. One Sunday afternoon he was engaged to lead a lovefeast at a place which had been one of his favourite haunts in his wild, poaching days and nights—the sweetly sylvan village which bears the descriptive name of *Harewood*. Johan in his pre-Christian days could say :

> " I know each path,
> Dingle, and bosky dell, of this wild wood.'

The justly-popular Earl and Countess who take their territorial title from the place had heard so much of the preaching, praying clothier of Yeadon that they resolved on making his acquaintance ; but, not wishing to disturb their cordial relations with the worthy parson of the parish, they did not ask admission to the lovefeast ; they therefore instructed one of their Methodist servants to present their compliments to Mr. Preston, and tell him that

the Countess would take it as a favour if he would bring a few of his companions with him and hold a prayer-meeting at "the house."

It is needful to explain that the Earl of Harewood, like so many other noblemen, and like the officials of our dockyards, had abundant reason for appreciating Methodism, for Methodism has proved itself to be as stout and workable material for the making of a "good and faithful servant" as are seasoned oak and teak for shipbuilding. The story of the building of that Harewood chapel is one of the classic episodes of Methodism. Before the building of the chapel the Methodist services had been conducted in the roomy kitchen of the Master of the Hounds. The late revered ex-President George Morley told me, as an instance of the supremest resignation, that once, when he went to preach at Harewood he found the devoted, hospitable mistress of the house in a very critical condition. So, at the service, during the first prayer, he pleaded with all the earnestness and pathos of his nature that she might be spared to the Church of which she was such a useful member, and to her husband, to whom she was so helpfully devoted. The husband, both as the host and leader of the Society, occupied the place of honour, just below the big chair, which was rigged up as a pulpit. Whilst the minister was in the very climax of his intercession for her recovery, and the congregation reinforcing his petitions with their vehement "Amens," the preacher's pathos was suddenly changed into a temptation to

amusement by the husband exclaiming in a tone of the sublimest acquiescence, "*Ony way*, Lord, *ony way*!"

Johnny Brown, the arboreal preacher that we have told of, was one of the five Yeadoners who formed the party, and it is to him that we are indebted for an account of the prayer-meeting at "the Castle." They were ushered into a room where the Earl, the Countess, and a number of domestics, all in their Sunday best, were expectantly assembled, and were, of course, received with a cordiality the most urbane. The Yeadoners began by striking up, just as they would have done "i' Yiddon Chapel," to the new tune of "*Rousseau's Dream*," "Rock of Ages cleft for me." It must be remembered that *Hymns Ancient and Modern* had not yet made that sacred song, which had just before appeared in the *Supplement to the Methodist Hymn Book*, so familiar as it has happily become. They sang it lustily, in the most wide-awake and explosive fashion, and yet with tearful eyes.

When two of them had prayed, they sang a few more verses; then two other prayers and another stave of holy song, and then Johan closed the meeting with such a prayer as Johnny Brown had never heard—no, not in Yeadon. The man of prayer was all aglow with the glory of the lovefeast, and the heavenly animation of the foregoing prayers and hymns, and "Forth from his breast he poured a mighty cry."

When they rose from prayer, the Earl and

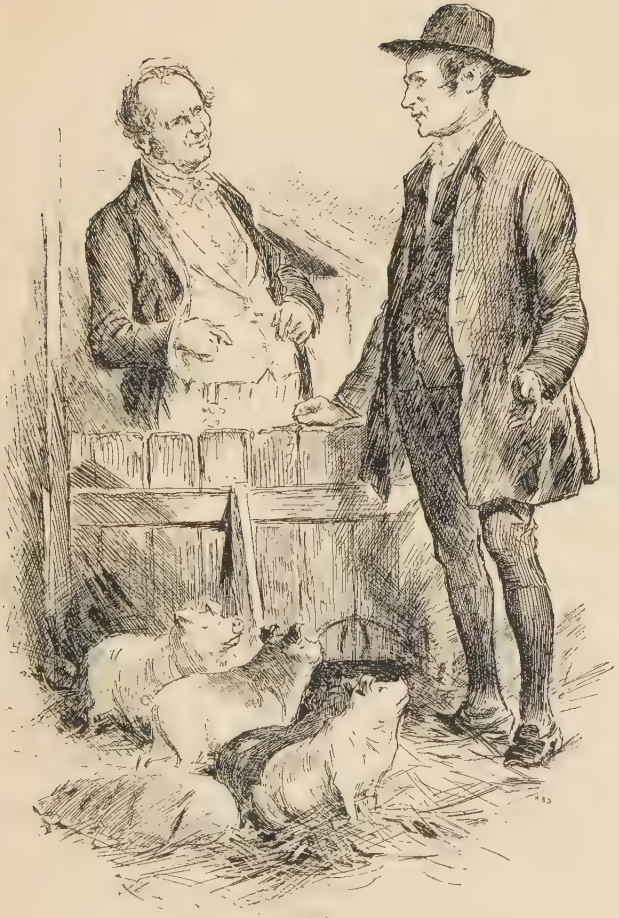
Countess both walked up to Preston, and each placing a hand on one of his broad shoulders, the Countess said: "We have no need to ask which is Mr. Preston," and the Earl requested him to come back to the Castle by nine o'clock the next morning. Johan humbly thanked the Earl, but told him he was "always *fast* on Monday mornings," because his grown-up family all spun and wove at home, and he had to "seek the work in for the week." "Oh," replied the Earl, "we can manage that. You must spend the night in Harewood, and I'll take care that you shall be at Yeadon in good time." So Johan slept that night under the roof of the Master of the Harewood Hounds, and, as both Earls and local-preachers are punctilious in punctuality, they met next morning on the stroke of nine.

But what could be the Earl of Harewood's urgent business with the Yeadon clothier? The fact is, he had heard, with amused and yet admiring interest, the ingenious way in which John Preston had "bagged" the proud but hunger-bitten infidel, by baiting his trap with home-fed bacon. He had also heard of the self-pinching philanthropies of Preston and his family during the depression of trade, which had thrown so large a proportion of the inhabitants of Yeadon out of work. So he resolved to show his appreciation of John Preston's goodness in a style that should have a flavour of John Preston's piquancy.

The Earl took great interest in the Royal and aristocratic enterprise of stockbreeding, and took

especial pride in his prize pigs. So when Preston reached the Castle on the Monday morning, the Earl informed him that he heard that he was, amongst other things, a first-rate judge in pigs; and should be much obliged if Preston would go with him and inspect his piggeries, and tell him which of all the breeds and animals he thought the best. The Earl confessed: "I flatter myself in possessing one of the finest breeds in the kingdom." So Preston and the Earl performed together their pilgrimage of porcine inspection. They went first to the finest breed, and the Earl asked Preston to select for himself the best in a litter, which, when full-fed and full-grown, would weigh some forty stone apiece. But Preston, with due thanks, excused himself on the ground that a pig of that breed was, to a working man, a white elephant, inasmuch as, to feed and fatten such an animal would reduce him to a sparer diet than would fairly fit him for his work; it was, in short, dear at a gift.

So the Earl took him to a litter of the next best breed, and told him to choose two of them, each of which, when at its best, would weigh some four and twenty stone. This offer Preston at once accepted, with a gratitude as frank and cordial as was the generosity of his noble patron. John was then led to the place where the carriage was in waiting for him, and in giving him the farewell handshake, he left in Preston's palm a soft enclosure, in opening which he found two £5 Bank of England notes. So Preston's entrance into



SO THE EARL TOOK HIM TO A LITTER OF THE NEXT BEST BREED.

Yeadon was a sort of triumph, and as he passed along the street in a carriage with an Earl's coronet on its panel, and a driver with the Earl of Harewood's livery on his back, he posed humorously as a lofty personage, and bowed to his staring fellow-villagers with a comic condescension.

The two little Methody piggies duly announced themselves later in the day, and though private property, they proved public pets, and were flatteringly interviewed for at least nine days. A few weeks afterwards, the Earl returned John Preston's visit, and inspected Preston's unpretentious piggery, and pronounced his satisfaction at the progress of the two distinguished little ones. Shortly afterwards a vehicle pulled up by Preston's doorstep bringing two bags of potatoes, two sacks of oatmeal, and a sack of sharps, with the Earl's kind enquiries as to the proficiency of the Harewood piggies. So their susceptibilities were spared the least temptation to feel slighted by their original owner.

The piquancy which formed so large a part in the Earl's own composition rendered him the more appreciative of the like quality in others. Of this I may give a single instance, which will illustrate also the tenacity of life in our rural superstitions. One evening, as the Earl was busy in his library, his attention was suddenly distracted by an unaccountable disturbance in the servants' hall. On ringing to enquire what it meant, he was informed that one of the domestics, having missed

a portion of her property, had applied to the village "wise man" to discover the offender, and he had fixed the charge on one of her fellow-servants. The outcry was occasioned by her hysterical protestations of innocence and ignorance of the whole affair, and the vociferous affirmations of the wizard, "that she, and no one else, was guilty of the crime!" Some of the other servants had vehemently sided with the accused, and others had as loudly upheld the reputation of the soothsayer.

The Earl sent for the man into the library, and asked him on what grounds he had based such a damaging accusation against one of his domestics. The man, with much bowing and scraping, and pulling of his topknot, and stroking of his chin, explained that he had been thoroughly initiated into the mysteries of his art by "Mother ——," who had, for a great number of years, been the acknowledged "wise woman" of the countryside, whose divinations had never been at fault, and who had bequeathed to him her books and her authority.

The Earl asked the expert whether he had arrived at the alleged facts solely by means of his art and mystery, or whether he had received any clue to those facts from the owner of the missing property, or from any other source. The professional assured the nobleman that he neither had, nor needed, any evidence outside his own peculiar faculty, and that what might be ordinarily passed as evidence, could not possibly be of any weight as against the result of his divinings.

Perceiving that the man, on making this preten-

sion to infallibility, glanced, as if instinctively, at some queer-looking, antique volumes which he carried under either arm, the Earl asked whether he might be allowed a look into their contents. The wise man forthwith handed them to the Earl, with an overdone obsequiousness, but assured him that to the uninitiated they were not of the slightest use.

The Earl, however, did not forego the privilege vouchsafed him. Having sufficiently inspected the handbooks of the "curious arts," he asked whether the man's special gift included insight into the future. He replied that it did on some points, but not on all. "For instance," said the Earl, "can you tell me where I shall be this time to-morrow?" The man confessed that this did not come within the range of his foreknowledge. "Can you tell me, then, where you will be?" "Yes," said he, "I shall be at home." "Now, there," said the Earl, "I happen to be a wiser man than you. I assure you, you will find yourself in the House of Correction." The prophecy came true.

The Earl of Harewood was not the only man of wealth, unconnected with Methodism, who took a warm and practical interest in John Preston. A distinguished manufacturer, who was also a famous sporting man, Mr. Timothy Horsfall, of Hawksworth Hall, who gave his name to Horsfall's Mill, in Bradford, was so impressed with Preston's preaching that he placed at his disposal a sufficient sum wherewith to start business as manufacturer on his own account, and that not only without interest, but with the assurance that he did not expect the

return of the money, or of any part of it, unless or until he found himself in a position to do just as well without it. He said it was a pity and a shame that a man of Preston's capability and character should not be placed in a social position of much greater influence than that which he then occupied. More than one of Preston's fellow-townsmen had risen into such a status from a much less favourable start than that which was now offered to John Preston.

Preston, of course, made this attractive opening a matter of prayer and of deep practical consideration; and, in view of the inevitable risks of extensive business, he "cam' ti t' conclusion" that, at his time of life, it would be conducive to neither his spiritual advancement nor his evangelistic usefulness to launch into a chopping current of which he had no adequate experience. He therefore, gratefully and gracefully, returned the sum the next day. However, a solid sum was anonymously sent to Preston, which he had the strongest reason to regard as Mr. Horsfall's gift. Several offers of the same kind were made to him, but he prudently refused to embark on an unknown course at so late a time of life.

At a great religious gathering in Leeds, I think, a very early meeting of what is now known as the Local Preachers' Mutual Aid Association, it was determined to close the proceedings by a sermon, and that John Preston should be asked to preach. But he was not present; so a member of the Association was sent with a cab (there was, as yet, no

rail) to fetch him. On reaching his cottage, he enquired of Mrs. Preston whether Mr. John Preston was within. She replied curtly that no Mr. John Preston was in, and that she "niver heeard tell o' no Mester John Preston as lived i' Yiddon." So he left the house, and questioned the minister as to the great local preacher's place of abode. He was referred once more to the same house. So, because of their importunity, she went to the door of the staircase which led up into the room where he was working, and shouted: "Johan, here's somebody fro' Leeds, in a glass coach, as wants to see Mester John Preston. Canst ta tell 'em where ti find him?" To which Johan shouted in reply: "Ah's noan bahn' to le-ave these treddles while (till) t' weft's used, for nob'dy."

So the deputation had to wait till the web was woven. He judiciously employed the time in creeping up Mrs. Preston's sleeve. When Johan descended, and had heard his errand, he *jibbed* no little at the first. But when "t' woife" took up the cause, and told him he "*were like*" to go, he, on his part, "were like" to follow the advice of a counsellor who had never yet misled him. The immense sanctuary was closely packed, and Dr. Robert Newton and Billy Dawson sat behind him in the pulpit.

Both Dr. Newton and Billy Dawson were great admirers of John Preston. Once, when Dr. Newton was taking one of his very rare and very short health-holidays at Harrogate, he found that John Preston was to preach the Sunday-school sermons

at Rigton, some four miles away, and resolved not to miss the opportunity of hearing him. The whole congregation was melted, and the great pulpit orator could neither conceal nor control his emotion as he listened to the rough but genuine eloquence of the unaffected local-preacher. When Billy Dawson heard the story of John Preston's mode of getting at the heart of the atheistic Willy Hudson, he literally laughed till he cried.

Nicholson, "the Airedale poet," who had himself been, for some years, a minister, and, of course, previously a local-preacher, seized on every opportunity of hearing Johan, and pronounced him to be at once the most powerful and the most captivating local-preacher he ever heard, though he was familiar with all the famous local-preachers of the Riding. He was very fond of going over to Yeadon to have a crack with Johan.

Once only was John Preston persuaded to preach occasional sermons in the Metropolis. His "lasses" (daughters) cherished a most filial tenderness for their father's reputation, and often entreated him to moderate his provincialisms, and to conform to conventional propriety, when officiating to a specially genteel congregation. They besought him now not to take his Yeadonisms up to London. This attempt at being anything but the veritable West Riding Johan was, of course, a failure. On his return, he laughed heartily at the breakdown of his first sermon in the capital, and his own "hoppled" condition. But in the evening, he just gave the Londoners a sermon "o' th'

owd sooart," having first explained his failure in the morning by his mistaken deference to the admonition of his "lasses."

He was equally felicitous as a Sunday-school teacher, superintendent, and advocate. It was affirmed in a local journal that "the persons who have succeeded in introducing the great commercial fabric for which Yeadon is so noted, received both their secular and religious education under the superintendence of Johan Preston," in the Yeadon Sunday-school.

Preston has been known to raise as much as £55 at two Sunday services in a moorland village; and as he never lost sight of the fact that men would come to hear who never strayed into a place of worship at any other time, his powerful, passionate appeals to sinners very often led to the conversion of the wildest.

This fact is touched upon in a ditty, published not long after his death:

He used to travel far and near
For Sunday-schools to preach,
And many thousands flocked to hear
The truth that hearts could reach.

Sunday-school teachers used to say
He got the roundest sum,
Which well would serve them till the day
When he again would come.

Whene'er he did the truth proclaim
A many went to hear,
Who never did God's house attend,
Except when he was there.

He often went to see the sick,
Their dying pillow smooth,
When life was quivering on the lip
He told them "God is love."

Numbers, vast numbers, he has seen
The mighty monster brave,
And cry, "O death, where is thy sting?
Thy victory, O grave?"

Sometimes Preston's unconventionality was blessedly effective. Once when he was preaching at Yeadon, he caught sight of one of the wildest "rips" in the neighbourhood, who was always designated by a portion of his Christian name, *'Lijah*, but with nothing of the great Jewish revivalist about him but his hirsute condition. This man had been drawn to chapel by an eagerness to hear Johan preach; but being anxious to escape observation, had hid himself behind a pillar before Johan was in the pulpit. But Johan soon caught sight of him, and chose for his Scripture lesson the chapter which describes the scene at Horeb, and thundered out the question, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" To which the dodging poacher, for once in his life detected as a trespasser into a Methodist chapel, exclaimed: "Well, Johan, Ah sore wanted to hear thah preich, bud Ah didn't aim for thee to see mah." To which the preacher answered: "Come forrard, 'Lijah lad, an' sum on ye mak' room for him ti sit reeght afore meh; for 'Lijah, lad, Ah's faahn (fain) to see thah here. It's just sich as thee as Jesus wants." The detected runagate blundered forth from his hiding-place,

and took the seat that was vacated for him. Johan made no further direct reference to the thrice welcome interloper, but dwelt with the warmest tenderness on the Saviour's love for sinners, and told once more the story of his own conversion. That *took* the poacher, and brought him *to his marrow bones.* He sought and found mercy, and gave himself to God, and to His people by the will of God.

One Sunday, Johan was appointed to preach at Shipley in the morning, and Dan Shelby in the evening. Dan determined to gather inspiration for his evening service by hearing Johan in the morning, and they fell in with one another on the road. As Johan had to preach elsewhere at night, he could not stay to hear Dan, so he persuaded him to give an outline of his sermon as they walked. Now, as we have seen, Daniel was a very favourite Scripture character with Johan, and on this occasion he brought him forward as an illustration. But he found himself forestalling some of Dan's good points, and thus picking plums out of Dan's pudding. But at once Johan "felt his honour grip," so he shouted out to his brother preacher: "Ah tell thah what, Dan, thah'll eh to thoile (spare) me a bit o' thy Daniel; but I's let him bide t' t' den for thee ti lift him aht ti neet." Of course, the chapel was crowded in the evening to see how Dan would hoist his namesake "aht o' t' den o' lions."

Dan I remember well, and can still see his strong-built frame, and can hear his simple, honest tones, and can recall more than one of his shrewd and helpful sayings as he stood in Woodhouse

Grove pulpit. Dan was a proper Danite, and had been a hero of the ring, and was a very sensible and serviceable preacher, with a manly and robust delivery.

John Preston proved a consummate class-leader, possessing in rich measure the chief qualifications for that important office. In experience he was not a novice, and his spiritual life was marked by a redundant joyance, which served as a tuning fork to keep his members up to the true concert-pitch of Christian happiness. His sympathies and sensibilities were of the quickest, strongest, deepest kind. He had an exceptional alertness and alacrity of insight into character and spiritual condition, and had the tender-heartedness of a nursing father. He was as informal in the class-room as in the pulpit, and his conduct of the social fellowship meeting had all the heartiness and interestingness which marked his conduct of a public service. He made the experience meeting, like the Sabbath, "a delight, the holy of the Lord and honourable," so that the recollection of it cheered the members half the week, and its anticipation heartened them throughout the labours of the rest. His advices were direct, explicit, practical, and personal.

Brother Joseph Hudson, one of the many converts in the revival of 1834, who joined John Preston's class, described with gusto the drastic way in which he dealt with an epidemic of moodiness which seemed one evening to have settled on his class. After he had patiently, but rather glumly,

heard a whole formful of doleful declarations, he started up, seized with a Samsonic grasp with both hands one end of the bench, and sent it and its heavy occupants *slap bang* upon the floor, and exclaimed : " Nah then, hes that shakkened t' devil off o' ye ? for it's same as if he'd been a-top o' ye all t' week ! "

John Preston never failed to make the Class-meeting both attractive and effective, whilst yet adhering closely to its essential elements of mutual edification and experience. The members came forth from the class-room with sharpened, shiny faces.

John Preston's death was a fitting consummation of his life. He who had administered the extreme unction of the exceeding great and precious promises to so many a gasping, fainting, struggling soul, was not left " unanointed, unannealed " by " the oil of gladness " from " the Holy One." To one who questioned him when he lay a-dying as to his state and prospects, he calmly, brightly answered : " *I'm stretched full len'th upon the Rock.*" John Preston, like John Newton, hoped to die shouting, and his last words were : " Amen, Amen ! " This is told with sweet simplicity in the ditty above quoted :

> He who so often stood to weep,
> Beside poor dying men,
> In Jesus sweetly fell asleep,
> Shouting " Amen ! Amen ! "
> " Amen ! Amen ! " we all resound.

The love and veneration of the neighbourhood decreed John Preston what was in truth a public funeral. Tbe long line of mourners, and the massed Methodism of the Circuit, was joined by sombre-clad contingents from a distance, who had flowed together to do honour to the memory of a noble man. The procession stretched along the road for more than a measured mile. His obsequies were patriarchal. His funeral sermon was preached on the same day by a young Wharfedale Methodist who bore towards him a filial love—now an eminent minister in the Canadian Conference, who to this day cannot speak of Johan with unmoistened eyes.

A monument was erected, which bears the following inscription :

"Sacred to the memory of John Preston, of Yeadon, who departed this life in peace, on the 22nd day of July, 1846, aged 67 years. Forty years he was a consistent member of the Methodist Society, 30 of which he was a Class-leader, and 20 a Local-preacher.

"This monument was erected by the teachers and scholars of the Yeadon Sunday-school, and friends of the deceased, as a token of respect for his unwearied exertions and able advocacy of Sabbath school institutions, and his prompt and ready attendance on the sick and dying, and his zeal for revivals and the universal spread of genuine Christianity."

There was a fittingness in the season of the

year at which this devoted labourer fell on sleep—just as the full-leaved, glowing midsummer is inclining towards autumn, when "the full corn in the ear" is white already unto harvest, and the golden grain, as it sways responsively to the balmy breath of heaven, seems beckoning the reaper to put in his golden sickle; when the rounded fruit bends down its laden bough to meet the gatherer's grasp; when the sunlight-loving songsters are preparing for their southward flight; while the woodlands and the fields still teem and ring with gladsome life, and the light still lingers lovingly to show the wearied working-man his homeward path. John Preston sank to rest by daylight, well-wearied by "the burden and heat of the day." Though his powerful physique was utterly worn out with work, his mental eye was not dim, neither was his spiritual force abated.

Though it is now well-nigh fifty years since Preston heard the summons, "Come up higher," yet his memory still clings closely to the lovely valleys of the Aire and Wharfe, and his repartees are current coin in many a Methodist homestead in the wide and populous tract of country wherein, like his blessed Master, "he went through the villages preaching the Word." I was delighted, a short time ago, to hear from the lips of a well-known London minister an application which was clenched by one of Preston's racy answers.

John Preston's grandson is Mr. Raymond Preston, the heroic and successful missioner amongst the colliers of South Wales, whose name and some of

whose exploits are so pleasantly familiar to the readers of *Joyful News*. Many of the rare and serviceable qualities of the grandsire show forth themselves in the devoted grandson, especially his insatiable passion for the salvation of his fellow-sinners, his wise and winsome lovingness, his resolute persistence, and his richness of resource in the yearning effort to rescue the lost lambs and sheep.

CHAPTER VII.

GENERAL ESTIMATE.

JOHN PRESTON claims an honourable place amongst the long and bright succession of West Riding local-preachers, from John Nelson downwards, to Sammy Hick and Jonathan Saville and Billy Dawson and Squire Brooke to the worthies of the present day.

If I were a painter, I should take John Preston as my model for an ideal picture of the prophet Amos, all that would be needed to complete it being the costume of the Oriental peasant and a slight Semitic stamp upon the grave and honest face. The Yeadon piece-maker had all the rustic, woodland strength and freedom of the herdman of Tekoa. There was in the local-preacher and the prophet the same topographic realism. I remember hearing Preston pray: "We praas Thah, there's a fahnten oppened for sin an' uncle-anness to t' house o' David, an' t' inhabitants o' Jerusalem, an' for t' inhabitants o' Idle, an' t' inhabitants o' Yidden, an' t' inhabitants o' Rawden, an' t' inhabitants o' Apperleh Brig, an' t' inhabitants o' Wood'us'

Grooave, an' t' inhabitants o' all them souls 'at lives rahnd abaht here."

There was the same gusty and tempestuous impetus with which the Prophet opens : " The Lord shall *roar* from Zion." There was the like proverbial and idiomatic cast of language. There was the same direct and trenchant dealing with particular sins, and the same bold, blunt outspokenness. There was the same boom of the alarm bell, and blaze of the beacon fire. He would always *out with it*, with no gentler apology than this : " If t' cap fits ye, *on* wi' 't." There was the same arresting closeness of appeal : " Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel ? " (chap. ii., 11.) The Israelitish prophet and the Yorkshire local-preacher were alike, also, in their startlingly homely and bucolic illustrations. The latter never went beyond the former in such passages as these : " Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves " (ii. 13)—where one can hear the creaking and complaining and, as it were, protesting noise of the overladen wagon along the rutty field-road. " Can a bird fall in a snare upon the earth, where no gin is for him ? " (iii. 5.) " The lion hath roared, who will not fear ? The Lord God hath spoken, who can but prophesy ? " (iii. 8).

They were alike, also, in their merciless exposure of the sins of professors of religion. There was the like scathing sarcasm ; there was the same suddenness of sublimity in the midst of rough and rustic scenery. What Jerome says of Amos is just as true of Preston : " He generally makes use

of comparisons taken from the country life wherein he had been brought up." And St. Augustine's defence of some of the minor prophets against the charge of "rusticity and unpoliteness" is just as forcible a vindication of John Preston: "They who accuse them could not choose a way more suitable, were they to have spoken on the same subject, *to the same persons, and in the same circumstances.*" And what that true literary critic, Bishop Lowth, says of Amos amongst the ancient prophets, is admirably applicable to John Preston, amongst our modern preachers: "He is almost equal to the greatest in the loftiness of his sentiments." Archbishop Newcome's description of the style of Amos is also strikingly appropriate to that of Preston: "Amos *borrows many images* from the scenes in which he was engaged; but he introduces them with skill, and gives them tone and dignity. We find in him many affecting and pathetic, many sublime, passages. . . . He is a prophet on whom a minister may safely form his style and manner." Of course, this does not refer to provincialisms.

I am truly thankful to have sat in youth at John Preston's feet, and to be spared to pen in my old age this tribute to his memory.

It was often asked: "What would Preston have become if he had received a first-class education, and begun to preach in early life? Having heard nearly all the great preachers of Preston's time, I have no hesitation in answering he would have become one of the greatest of them all. And more than this: his sermons would have taken rank

amongst the truest specimens of robust, stout, sturdy English. The British classic whose sermons bear the strongest likeness to those of John Preston is the famous Dr. South, whose name, in all propriety, should have been Dr. North, in virtue of the breezy, bracing, tonic quality of his Borean style. In fact, I have heard no one (Spurgeon excepted) whose preaching came so closely to the ideal of genuine apostolic preaching set forth by South (in the famous sermon which at once placed him in the forefront of preachers) than did the preaching of John Preston. And, stranger still, that same description is such a marvellous fore-picturing of John Preston's preaching that one might have fancied that the latter must have formed his style upon that very model.

This is no after-thought of mine, for I was studying South at the very time that I was hearing John. This statement of mine must seem so reckless, that I am obliged (*meo more*) to give examples of it *on the hook.* South says :

"Christ and His Apostles well knew that the truth delivered by them would support itself, and that barely to deliver it would be abundantly sufficient; *nakedness of all things being never able to make Truth ashamed.*" They were not afraid to venture it in the plainest language. Christ closed His instructions with the question : "Do ye understand these things?" Even when Christ and His Apostles preached the most mysterious truths, though the thing uttered might nonplus the reason, the manner of their uttering it was plain, easy, and

familiar, and the hearer never put to study, when it was his business to hear and understand.

"The clearness of the Apostles' preaching rendered it victorious and irresistible, and *he is still the most powerful preacher and the best orator* who can make himself best understood. A second property of the ability of speech conferred by Christ upon His Apostles was *simplicity*, with nothing in it above the reach and relish of an ordinary apprehension. . . . For *there is a certain majesty in plainness*; the proclamation of a prince never frisks . . . but commands in natural expression. A substantial beauty, as it comes out of the hands of nature, needs neither paint nor patch. The Apostles, poor mortals! were content to tell the world, in plain terms, that he who believed should be saved, and he who believed not should be damned; and this was the dialect which pierced the consciences and made the hearers cry out: 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' It tickled not the ear, but sunk into the heart. The Apostles' preaching was mighty and successful, because plain, natural, and familiar, and by no means above the capacity of their hearers.

"The gift of preaching bestowed by Christ on His Apostles required a suitable degree of *zeal*. The same things differently expressed are, indeed, not the same. *Indifference dispirits a discourse; a due fervour* gives it *life and authority*, and *sends it home to the inmost powers with an easy insinuation*, and a deep impression . . . a preacher's showing *a warm impression* on his own part of the things

uttered by him, so that *the very manner of his speaking shall demonstrate the real inward sense of what he speaks.*"

All these "signs of an apostle" John Preston had in a very marked degree, and, as the result, he had many "seals of his apostleship." And besides these marks, he had pre-eminently that which South regards as the crowning qualification of a preacher: "a relenting strain of tenderness, vigour, and winning compassion, endearing and affectionate."

In truth John Preston was a preacher after South's own taste and style, whom he would have preferred to the most approved and brilliant rhetorician. For my own part, I had rather have a yard of Preston's honest, homespun eloquence than an ell of shiny, satin-smooth respectability.

It seems natural, in this connection, to compare John Preston, the Yeadon working clothier, with his only namesake who has won distinction in Church history as a famous pulpit orator, the Rev. John Preston, D.D., one of the leading Puritan divines, and yet court chaplain to James I. and Charles I., and preacher at Lincoln's Inn. He was chaplain-in-waiting at the death-bed of James, and, in a close coach, accompanied the young king Charles to London. He forms an imposing figure in Neal's *History of the Puritans*; he was a great University don, and, both as a preacher and a writer, was one of the most fashionable and the most popular of his time. He was ordained and a fellow of a college when he was half a decade younger than

his Yorkshire namesake was at his conversion. He began to preach when he was a quarter of a century younger than the Yorkshire clothier was at the time he first climbed into a pulpit. The list of his writings takes up a large space in bibliography, yet he has left no proof of such originality and genius as were so conspicuous in the uncultivated Yeadoner.

A first-rate early education would, however, have deprived the Yorkshireman of his racy, strong vernacular, and stripped him of the charm of his rurality. *Rurality*, I say, and not rusticity, for the latter word, though sometimes applied to Johan, would convey to one who did not know him a very wrong idea of the man. John Preston had about him all the picturesqueness and variety, the fresh-mindedness and fresh-heartedness of the fields and woods, but he was not a *rustic*. He had not the slightest clownishness or boorishness about him. With the homely habits of the working man he conjoined those instincts of a gentleman which a coronet cannot confer. Though he could not behave himself conventionally he did not behave himself unseemly.

One very powerful element of Preston's preaching was his, so far as I know, unique and inimitable habit of individualising the sin he was rebuking without approach to personality.

His unconscious personations, as of the backbiter, for example, were consummate. The subtle satire he could put into his tone and look and gesture, under the guise of deference and depreca-

tion, exceeded anything I ever witnessed in any other speaker. And in his highest mood of sentiment and illustration, his attitude and movement and expression took on a dignity and nobleness which art could never teach. He had a marvellous mobility of feature, and a strength and flexibility of voice, and varied play of tone.

The diversified gifts of preachers are Divinely distributed by the Head of the Church to meet the various needs and tastes and temperaments of hearers. John Preston was pre-eminently a preacher for the populace, but he was "to all well-pleasing," excepting those to whom conventional propriety is of more consequence than native genius and spiritual intensity. Nevertheless, he had sense enough to feel that he was better suited to "cry out in the speech of" Airedale, than to cater for the cultured townsfolk. He could rarely be persuaded to adventure himself into the highly-polished pulpit of a huge town chapel.

The botanist would sadly miss his orchids, and Preston was much like some rare and striking specimen of the woodland orchid, with its surprising mimicries and its still more startling individuality. The orchid sometimes seems to have been formed in the merest freakishness, one might almost say facetiousness of nature. And that is part of its attractiveness. So some peculiarities of Preston might seem to have been hit off by Nature in a merry mood. And to all these gamesome genialities the grace of God allowed the freest play. Nothing kills the orchid but Arctic frost or tropical aridity,

and nothing could repress the genius of this powerful man but the frozenness or desert dryness of the spiritual atmosphere in which he was called to exercise his gift.

The first impression made by Preston's preaching was that of *utter honesty.* He was neither a sermoniser nor a pulpiteer. He evidently meant *business.* To him preaching was plainly a commission with a definite, immediate aim — the salvation of immortal souls. This primary outstanding feature was well set off by a resistless *heartiness* and *humanness.* He seemed to capture his congregation, much as the Life Guardsman at Waterloo took prisoners a troop of Frenchmen: he "surrounded" them. He seized their sympathies with a gigantic grasp, and, with many a touch of nature and of grace, would make a whole crowd kin.

Of peasant philanthropists, he was the priestly king. In his combined independence and helpfulness, he was a noble illustration of the noble apostolic maxim: "Though I be *free from all men*, yet am I become *the servant of all* . . . that *by all means I might save some.*" Hence he was a living and conclusive refutation of all cavilling against the blessed Christian privilege of Perfect Love. If any disputatious Yeadoners should laugh to scorn this "hope of the Gospel," one silencing enquiry was close at hand: "But what about *Johan*?" To which the only answer that was at once forthcoming was, "Ay, Johan's reet enif, we all knaw, but hah mony Johans is there hereabaht, thinks ta?"

In Preston the hymn-prayer seemed answered to the full:

Father, on me the grace bestow,
  Unblameable before Thy sight,
Whence all the streams of mercy flow,
  Mercy, Thine own supreme delight,
To me, for Jesu's sake impart,
And plant Thy nature in my heart.

Thus may I show the Spirit within,
  That purges me from every stain,
Unspotted from the world and sin,
  My faith's integrity maintain;
The truth of my religion *prove*
By *perfect purity and love.*

John Preston was one of the most loving, most loveable, of men, and that the more by reason of his strength and frankness and vivacity. Dear, genial, self-ignoring, unconventional old Johan! alike clung to and clinging, attaching and attached, resourceful and sagacious, docile, yet uncultured, whose chief passion was a love for souls—with his incorrigible, ever-blooming laddishness, his woodland wildness, and his audacious drollery, must surely claim a small memorial from one who studied him with an eager interest, and loved him with a reverential fondness. Preston was all the more respected because he was respectful, and was accorded with the more readily because amenable to the claims and rights of others.

Underlying all these qualities was the virtue which, to Yorkshiremen, is absolutely indispensable, a virtue which not only hides a multitude of

awkwardnesses and inconvenient angularities, but without which all other excellences are shabby, shoddy, worthless. He was *johnick*, as the West Riding usually has it; *jannick* in the North Riding. Whatever may be the orthography or etymology of the word, its signification is not to be mistaken. It designates a character and nature that may *thoroughly be trusted*, that may be calculated on in an emergency, that is incapable of meanness or underhandedness. It is the one sufficing apology for fad, crotchet, hobby, and oddness. "Oh, but he's *johnick!*" i. e., *right at the bottom*. It means precisely what the patriarch meant when he remonstrated with his carping friends: "Ye should say, *Wherefore trouble we him*, seeing that *the root of the matter is in him*?"

Preston was a realist in the truest, deepest sense. Like some of our greatest imaginative writers, such as Burns, Wordsworth, and Miss Evans, his penetrative fancy could pierce to the very core of commonplace existences. He spoke of nothing but what he knew by experience or by closest contact. He knew the natural history of the Yorkshire folk, and he read and represented working-men vividly, their weaknesses and their fine potentialities. The sisters Brontë did not depict with greater power and faithfulness, in *Shirley* and in *Wuthering Heights*, the peculiar specimens of human nature indigenous to the moors and dales that border Aire and Wharfe. The dashes of his rustic pencil had the full sweep, the livingness, and the solemn and yet oft grotesque

significance of actual existence. "Hev' y' n't seen 'em?" he would confidently ask when he portrayed a character. He knew the warp and woof of the Yorkshire form of human nature, and could hold up its texture to the light and test its substance.

All the real preachers I have met with, who had heard John Preston, spoke of him with enthusiastic admiration. The two eloquent W. O.'s—W. O. Simpson and W. O. Booth—and Mr. Ex-President Walton, all Airedale men, seemed never tired of hearing or of telling the sayings and the doings of the rare old Yeadon clothier.

Before closing I may illustrate the simplicity of John Preston's life, and his informality when introduced to a higher circle than his own, by one little incident which a wealthy Bradford manufacturer was very fond of telling. One Sunday, after Johan had been preaching to a crowded congregation in the enormous Eastbrook Chapel, this gentleman invited him to dinner. It must be noted that, to the most comfortable Yorkshire workman, a dish cover was an undreamed of superfluity. If he had company to dinner the two courses were placed upon the table at first and simultaneously, and the hostess, who always took the head of the table, would say to her odour-sniffing guests, "Now you see your dinner." When Johan was escorted to the manufacturer's spacious dining-room he took his seat beside a table that seemed to him all show and no substance. When requested to ask a blessing the clothier rose solemnly, surveyed the burnished, gleaming dish covers and tureens, and said

"O Lord, for Christ's sake, grant Thy blessing with what we are about to receive," adding, in a wistful, puzzled, audible *aside*, "*if there is owt.*" The prompt withdrawal of the covers solved the mystery at once.

This reminds us of one of Hodgson Casson's graces before meat, which the late hospitable Mr. Barrett of Wakefield used to tell. Hodgson Casson was his guest after preaching one week evening in that bonnie town. Mr. Barrett had invited a large party to meet the great Revivalist, and had, Wakefield-wise, set forth a sumptuous supper. Mr. Casson asked the blessing thus: "O Lord! we know that heavy suppers are very bad things. Lord, give us grace not to take more than will do us any good."

The peasant-preacher Preston was a fine example of the truth enunciated by the peasant-poet in his *Epistle to Davie*:

It's no' in titles nor in rank,
It's no' in wealth like Lunnon Bank,
To purchase peace and rest.
It's no' in makin' muckle mair,
It's no' in books, it's no' in lear,
To make us truly blest.

If happiness ha' not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich or great,
But never can be *blest*.
Nae treasures, nor pleasures
Could make us happy long;
The *heart*, aye's the part, aye,
That makes us right or wrong.

In any monograph of Johan Preston, it would be an unpardonable and unchivalrous injustice to omit a passing notice of his better half, "t' woife," or "shoo" (*she*, by eminence and emphasis the *woman*). Mrs. Preston—I beg her pardon—"Nan Preston," for she "niver he-ard tell of ony" Mrs. John Preston, any more than "of ony Mr. John Preston, of Yeadon"—"Nan Preston" was just the feminine form and inflexion of Johan Preston—in fact, seemed fashioned by the Creator Himself from a rib hard by his own strong heart. She was a neat, natty, notable housewife, very "menseful" in her dress. She was trim, but not at all prim; particular, but not precise. She dressed in becoming apparel, becoming her station, her age, and his Church-membership, but had no idea of the carnality of colour. She was as freespoken and as outspoken as her spouse. "She did him good and not evil all the days of his life"; "she looked well to the ways of her household"; she was very jealous lest Johan should be the spoilt child of popularity. He must be Johan Preston and be no one else. She showed her fondness for him by allowing no one to criticise him but herself. Though he would "submit to no man's *ipse dixey*," he surrendered at discretion to one woman's *ipsa dixsay*. The head, as well as "the heart of her husband did safely trust in her." In all practical concerns she was his "guide, philosopher, and friend."

Happily for himself, but most unhappily for the community, John Preston did not live to witness the

convulsion of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, which began in 1849. His influence must have at least greatly mitigated the commotion which ensued in Yeadon, on the visit of two of the most popular of the expelled Ministers. Preston's attachment to Wesleyan Methodism conjoined the solidity of principle with the intensity of passion. He used to say in Lovefeasts, "I've had my *ups* and *dahns*, like all t' rest; but, thank God, I've never hed ony *ins* and *ahts* (outs)." It must, however, be acknowledged that, in John Preston's time, "Equality" was almost as dear to the Yeadoner as were "Fraternity" and "Liberty." Hence the few wealthy Methodists cultivated rather than eschewed the broadest Yeadon dialect.

THE END.

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